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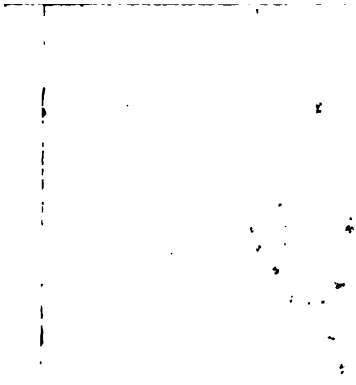
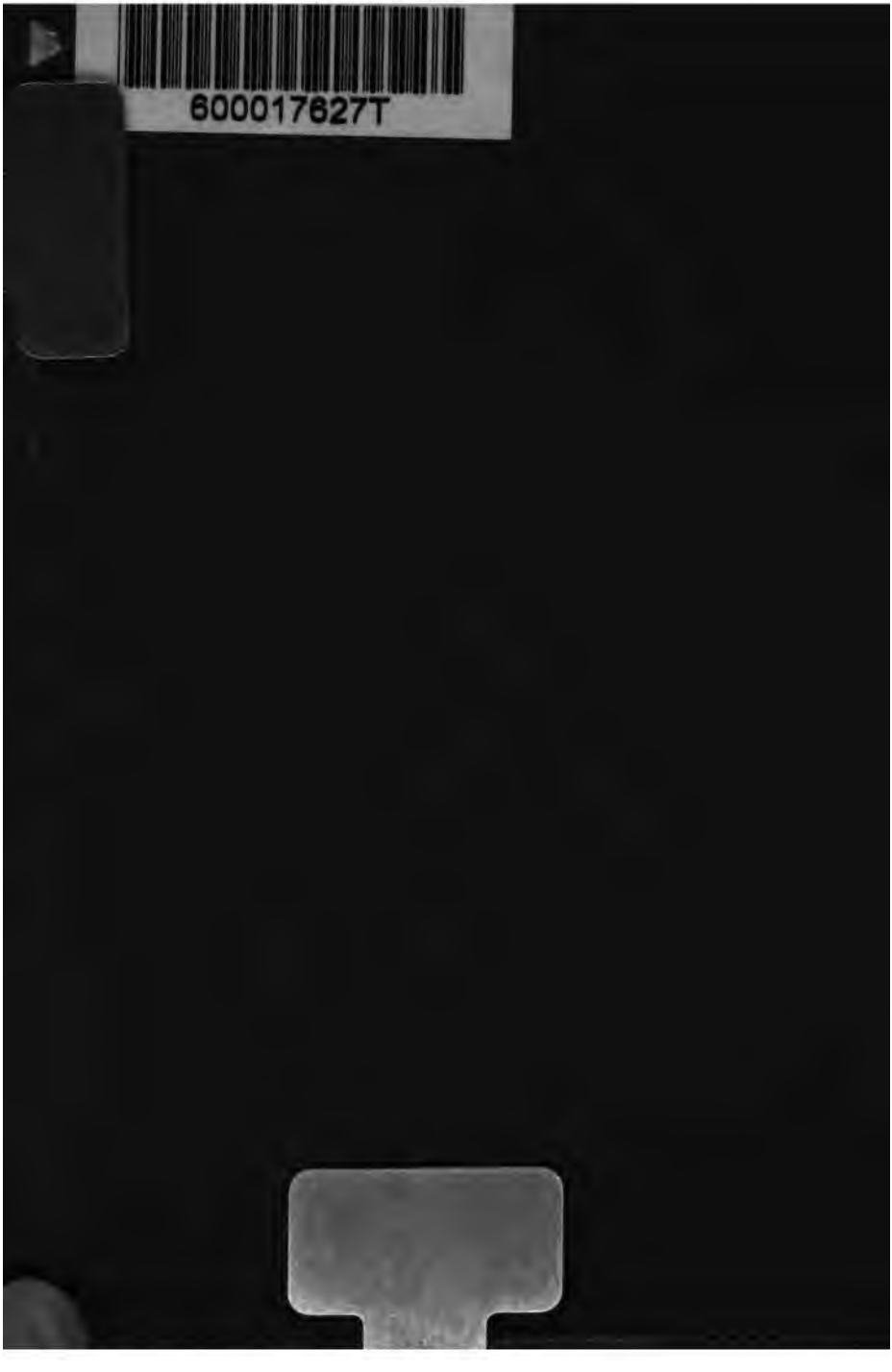
MEMOIRS

OF

HENRIETTA CARACCIOLO.

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MEMOIRS

OF

HENRIETTA CARACCIOLO.

MEMOIRS

OF

HENRIETTA CARACCIOLO,

OF THE PRINCES OF FORINO,

EX-BENEDICTINE NUN.

Votum feci,
Gratiam accepi.

FROM THE ITALIAN.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
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TO THE READER.

My sole aim in writing these Memoirs has been to confirm, as far as lay in my power, with argument drawn from fact, the opportune and just decree of the Italian Government in the suppression of Convents, and to disabuse the minds of those (if haply any such remain) who deem these places the repositories of all the religious virtues.

That the class of persons immured in them is one useless to society all know; but that is not enough. I have proposed, by unveiling the intimacy of their lives, to exhibit this class as even baneful to it—as representing a class of ideas in opposition and hostility to the ideas not only of men distinguished as the thinkers of the age, but those already rooted in the public and general opinion.

Had the Cloister never existed, we should not have had the countless instances of the young immured in inaccessible prisons through the heartlessness of selfish

parents or the persuasion of the confessor—young life cut off from all earthly affections, and, in sad repentance of a vow, sinking into a premature grave after a most unhappy existence.

I am aware that the number of the partisans of Monachism, both clerical and laical, amounts to no mean cipher; and I am prepared to hear, in their objection to this, that if the above were true, a part at least, if not all of these, would avail themselves of the liberty now at their disposal, whilst in these southern provinces of Italy we may observe the contrary.

To this I may reply, that the principal, if not the only, solicitude of the confessors of these unhappy victims being to demoralise and contract their minds, implanting maxims which certainly are not those of the Gospel, painting a dark abyss beyond the cloister walls, and denouncing the wrath of Heaven and the thunders of Rome as ready to break upon the head of such as should seek or desire to pass from them—can it be wondered if, under such nurture and discipline (in many cases from earliest infancy), the narrowed, the enfeebled mind should shrink superstitiously from

a freer air of heaven and the contact of more humane influences?

The facts which I narrate belonging to our own day, I cannot well be taxed with exaggeration when it will cost so little to arrive at the truth. I cite date, and place, and person; it lies within the power of all to verify these.

I have chosen rather to suppress much—to have left in the shade many a recital not unworthy of being drawn into clearer light. The loss is entirely my own, having not unfrequently deprived these Memoirs of the advantage of that colouring and dramatic relief which would have made them more attractive. To this I was urged by respect for the memory of the dead, for the sake of those who still survive, and frequently for what was due to myself.

HENRIETTA CARACCIOLO.

Castellamare (Naples), 1864.

CONTENTS.

Chap.		Page
I.	Early Years	1
II.	First Loves	7
III.	Jealousy	16
IV.	Mourning	30
V.	The Cloister	35
VI.	Desertion	49
VII.	"Their Reverences"	68
VIII.	Scenes and Customs	79
IX.	The Bell	108
X.	The Profession	130
XI.	The "Charity" of Nuns	146
XII.	Their Poverty and Humility	154
XIII.	Insanity of Nuns	164
XIV.	Convent Thieves	187
XV.	Acolytes	196
XVI.	Chiarina	207
XVII.	Cardinal Riario	216
XVIII.	1848	236

CHAP. PAGE

XIX.—THE "CONSERVATORIO DI COSTANTINOPOLI" .. 248

XX.—THE "ANNUNZIATA" OF CAPUA 266

XXI.—THE ARREST 281

XXII.—THE "RITIRO DI MONDRAGONE" 295

XXIII.—A BRIEF RESPITE 327

XXIV.—SPIES 337

XXV.—LIBERTY 352

THE NEAPOLITAN CLOISTER.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS.

It is from no desire to vaunt a distinguished descent, but as the duty of a narrator, and to show by what means the native aristocracy were debased under the Bourbon rule, without a corresponding advantage to the other classes, that I mention that one of the oldest and most distinguished families of Naples is that of Caracciolo, to which I have the honour to belong.

My father, the second son of Gennaro Caracciolo, Prince of Forino, was born in 1764. He was destined to the career of arms; the portion of younger children under the law of primogeniture which existed at the period at which he came into the world, being but a scanty one. At forty years of age he married a young lady of Palermo, who had hardly reached her fourteenth.

Theresa Cutelli (such was the maiden's name), after

having borne him four other daughters, gave birth to myself on the 17th February, 1821, and I was christened Henrietta after a sister of my father—a Benedictine nun—one of the innumerable sacrifices which my race had consecrated to this Order.

I was born in Naples, in the palace of my ancestors, a few weeks before Italy and Greece—these two realms of the antique civilization—had raised their fronts with the hope of independence; and was but three months old when I was taken to Bari, my father, who had now attained the rank of Marshal, having been appointed to the command of that province.

I remember as distinctly as if it had occurred but yesterday a circumstance which befel me in that city when I had but just completed my third year. My family, having been invited to a masked ball, took me also thither, dressed as a little peasant-girl. Sleep soon took possession of me, and my mother, enveloping me in a shawl, delivered me to the footman to be taken back to our residence and to be consigned to my maid. The ball continued long and with great gaiety. At its termination my mother asked for the servant, to inquire whether I had wakened or had cried by the way—he was not to be found, nor had any one seen him return. My parents, in considerable agitation, sent forthwith to our house to learn what had become of me and the domestic, but the answer brought back was that no child had been delivered to the maid. This only

served to increase their consternation. My father flew back himself to the house, and, breathless, heaped question upon question, the woman still persisting in asserting that she had seen no one return. This intelligence put the crowning point to the general agitation, and all the members of the family present, together with such relations and friends as were also there, put themselves in immediate pursuit of me. Then commenced a search of indescribable confusion and bewilderment, an endless passing and repassing over the same ground—all in vain. Finally it was suggested to change the beat: and having then wandered about for some hours, the pursuers came upon a low drinking-house, the door of which stood ajar, the uproar within betokening a debauch. Pushing the door open, the party found me extended upon a couple of chairs, immersed in the most profound and calm sleep, whilst the servant, in a state of intoxication, was engaged in a brawl with the companions of his debauch. The precipitation with which my mother seized her anxiously-sought property awoke me. The strange scene in which I found myself, the voice of my father, who had seized the untrustworthy messenger by the throat and had hurled him to the ground, have deeply graven that wakening on my memory. And this is the first, the earliest remembrance of my life.

After a residence of four years in Bari, a telegraphic despatch summoned my father suddenly back to Naples.

The Bourbons ever marked their acts by that sudden and mysterious terrorism which has left the name of the Council of Ten so formidable in history. My mother with ourselves followed immediately afterwards, by his direction, and in the escort of one of his friends.

We travelled by post, to reach the capital with more expedition. It was on the third day of our journey when my mother became aware of a deathly paleness which overspread the face of the officer appointed by my father as our companion. Anxiously she inquired what ailed him; he replied that he felt very ill. A few instants more, and, leaning from the window, he vomited a torrent of blood.

In such deplorable circumstances, and with the prospect of seeing the sufferer from one moment to the other remain a bloodless corpse, we were constrained to continue our journey so as to arrive at some village, that we might procure him the aid his state required. All efforts and remedies proved vain—the unfortunate man did not live to see the close of that day.

Arrived in Naples we found my father in sore dejection.

Without assigning any reason this capricious and unjust government had placed him on the reduced list; and it was not until much later, and after considerable pains, that he learnt that he had been privately accused of disaffection. He sought an audience of the king

repeatedly; but Francisco I., who was then on the throne, and not less odious and remorseless than his father, was inexorable.

We were reduced almost to indigence, for his pay (that of a fourth class) hardly sufficed for the most urgent wants of so large a family.

We passed three long years in this penury—three years of pinching want. Finally, having been restored to active service, my father received the appointment to the governorship of the province of Reggio, to which we immediately proceeded. It was the 15th October of the year 1827.

We had taken our passage for the port of Messina on board of an English brig, and were much dismayed at receiving the summons of its commander to embark at the moment that a furious gale, accompanied by showers of hail and by lightning, threatened annihilation to every vessel in the bay. The remonstrances of my parents availed nothing with the determined captain, and we passed a night of extreme peril, of terror, and suffering. This persistance of the Englishman in putting to sea in such a tempest seemed inexplicable to my father; and, having expressed to him his astonishment at this hazardous act, the imperturbable seaman laid before him a paper, on which was traced a routine of trips which he should yet make before reaching London on New Year's-day, "For there, and on that particular day," added he, "I have engaged to marry a

young lady to whom I am tenderly attached; and all the elements let loose together on me shall not deter me." Laughter and indignation struggled for the mastery with my parents; they laughed to hear an impassive Englishman express himself with such warmth on the subject of his passion, and they were enraged that this man should have exposed our lives to a certain danger for a caprice of his own. Another brig, emboldened by our example, had followed us; but, less fortunate than ourselves, had been obliged to throw its cargo overboard, and arrived, bearing the corpse of a woman who had died from extreme suffering and terror.

Our reception in Calabria was most flattering. Four carriages conveyed our family to the sumptuous palace destined for my father. The charming aspect of the place, the gay company, and Calabrian hospitality made us in a few days forget the sufferings of the three past years, even to the sinister howling of the tempest; so easily are the early woes of childhood effaced. Did I presage then the storm and the woes which awaited me?

CHAPTER II.

FIRST LOVES.

EIGHT years of uninterrupted uniformity now passed over; the amusements of childhood, the requirements of our education, occupied the day, whilst the reunion of a cultivated Calabrian society, together with the military, brought it to a pleasing conclusion.

In the course of these eight years my three elder sisters were married, and there then remained myself and another, who was my senior by one year, my ill-fated sister Josephine, who died early.

My health up to this period had always been most delicate. Of highly nervous temperament, pallid and of slender form, gifted, too, with an inordinate and yet fatal sensibility, I gave no promise of reaching the proportions of a strongly-constituted organisation. When, however, I entered my fourteenth year, my figure expanded; to the sallowness of my cheeks succeeded a healthy colour, which seemed all the more deepened

from the natural dark tone of my complexion. Unfortunately (if we may apply such a term to love), with the development of the body came the precocious advancement of the heart. The undisturbed serenity of childhood vanished at once. Sleep no longer brought its restoring balm. I felt a void within—a void eminently painful, which I desired to fill with the possession of an object as yet vague, indistinct, undetermined by myself. A look, a word sufficed to disturb the uniform beating of the heart—to make me think I had inspired a sentiment akin to that which I felt myself. Then would come the disenchantment—that look had been directed at random, that word had been uttered in mere politeness, without any participation of the heart in its meaning.

Severe beyond measure was our bringing up on the side of my mother. We were frequently and in the most capricious manner forbidden by her many acts of the most innocent character. She meted out rigorously the hour we were allowed to remain on the balcony during the promenade, and any transgression of this order was visited with the utmost severity.

But who does not know how rebellious against discipline are the aspirations of the heart at fourteen?—

> " . . . . Ben sa il ver chi l'impara
> Com' ho fatt' io con mio grave dolore ! "

The last of my joyous, my careless days, expired on

that very balcony. Amid the crowd of loungers which filed past beneath our windows I had observed a young man of unusually attractive appearance. He passed and repassed several times during my stay there, and I could not help fancying that I myself was the "lode-star to his gaze."

I summoned my maid, who as a native of Reggio was likely to be informed, and, pointing him out to her as he was leaving the promenade, asked her if she knew who he was. She replied that it was Signor Carlo ——, the eldest son of a numerous family, not rich, but in easy circumstances.

From that moment I thought but of the hour when I could again take my place on the balcony. I longed to have sight once more of the object which had filled my thoughts since the former day.

The hours of the night seemed endless—the day which followed, oh, how long! The moment came at last, and indescribable was my pleasure as I beheld him again. Our eyes met, and I became crimson. He observed my confusion, and a slight smile passed across his lips. Raising his hand slowly to his hat, he saluted me. What rashness was mine! I answered it all confusion, "tutta tremante." I stepped at once from the impersonality of childhood to the consciousness of an expansive individuality.

From that hour peace left mè—to work was weariness—my lessons became intolerable. I lived only for

the scanty hour it was permitted me to sit on the balcony. Every day he passed by our house. To see him—to return his salute—was more than existence to me. Many months passed thus, during which the demonstration of our love did not pass the bounds of looks. He manifested a desire to see me often, and everything about him seemed marked by sincerity; only—I heard of no communication to my parents—on the contrary, it seemed as if he were anxious to conceal our attachment. Opposite to ours was a palace whose first story had been occupied for a long time. One morning I saw from the window a quantity of furniture which was being carried into this by porters. Curiosity to know who were to be our new neighbours made me return later to the same place. I then saw Carlo on the balcony. Why does he leave his own family? was my first thought: perhaps to be near me—to see me oftener. He withdrew within, and by a gesture asked if I loved him. I nodded an affirmative.

On that evening a number of our friends had assembled in the drawing-room, and in the conversation of some young men close to me I heard his name pronounced. I listened—I was, however, only able to seize the words "that he had ceased to reside with his family to be quite alone with his bride."

This last word appalled me! but, though I strained my attention to the utmost, I could not catch another word of their conversation.

My love only increased under this frequency of seeing him; for, eluding the vigilance of my mother, I would run to the window on every opportunity; ever in the belief that the bride of whom they spoke was no other than myself. Full of the delicious deception that Heaven had created him for none other than myself, how many and what projects of future happiness did I conjure up! Is there in the heart of the enamoured girl a day more ardently sighed for than that of her bridal-morn? That which the term "future" sounds in the ear of religion and philosophy is to the impassioned girl contained in the mystical word "marriage."

My maid, observing me on one of these occasions, ran into the room to me crying—

"Oh, Signorina! what are you doing? Come away from the window! that gentleman is going to be married in a few days!"

"You are quite mistaken," I answered, conscious that I became deadly pale. "It is impossible!" and turning towards him, I asked him, by a sign, if he loved me.

The reply was an affirmative.

"You see," I exclaimed, turning to the maid, "you see you are mistaken."

"No, no! I am not mistaken. You are a child—you do not know what men are capable of. As surely as this day is Sunday, Signor Carlo is to marry another lady within a month. My mother asked Signor Carlo

himself if the lady was to be the Signorina Caracciolo, and he answered, No! that the Caracciolo was well enough, but that she had very little money!"

Without replying I shut the window and withdrew. I felt as if my heart would burst. Tears came at last, and I wept the livelong night, as those weep who learn the world at the expense of disenchantments and tears. Is there a woman who has not loved? Such a one, were all the wisdom of Plato and Aristotle infused into her mind, would yet know the world but by half.

It was soon announced to me that he passed the whole of his time at the house of his future bride, and hat it wanted but a week to the marriage-day. This filled up the measure of my despair—the commotion brought on a fever, which lasted a fortnight.

My mind became somewhat calmed. With my own hand did I place the funereal stone on the grave of my passion, and grave the word "forget" upon it. Let those maidens whose sound education has never made them see in the lover aught but the future husband, imitate my example in this.

Carlo's image never found place again within my thoughts, except under the semblance of some dramatic personage, the fictitious vicissitudes of whose existence had moved me in some theatre at no distant period before.

One evening, towards the close of this illness, at an advanced hour, the sound of several carriages stopping

near our door struck me—"What is this noise in the street, Antonia?" I asked. "Is the bride coming?"

"Even so, Signorina; she has just arrived, accompanied by her relations."

I started as with an electric shock.

"When did the marriage take place?"

"This very evening."

I laid my head on the pillow again, and was silent.

Several months had now passed over since the above occurrence had taken place; my mind during that period had recovered a perfect calm after the commotion it had received from the treachery of Carlo. I could now behold, with the utmost indifference, the same man beside his bride.

My mother had by this time given birth to two more daughters; their care served as an occupation and a distraction to me.

The Calabrian youth, by temperament lovers of gaiety, were full of the occupation which their masks and costumes gave them during the carnival of this winter of 1839. Our house was ever, during this season, thrown open nightly with music and dancing, and a crowded assemblage never failed to pass these festive hours there.

On one of these evenings my father received the visit of a gentleman who had been lately appointed to a civil situation in the province. He came accom-

panied by his son, a young man apparently of some twenty years.

This youth, whose name was Domenico, never once withdrew his gaze from me during the whole period of the visit. Not, strictly speaking, handsome; his eyes, of admirable conformation, possessed that singular power of fascination which has the effect of magnetism. Was he conscious of this power? he who thus with such tenacity "held me with his glittering eye." All I know is, that under this fascination I experienced a trouble, a state of being ill at ease, a singular and still increasing disturbance of the whole system. I tried change of position, conversation, abstraction of every kind, but in vain; those inexorable eyes pursued me everywhere, drew me without resistance to themselves, and seemed to deprive me of all volition.

On the day following I again saw him—in the evening likewise. I could hardly move a step afterwards that I did not encounter him and observe his anxiety to follow me and evince his admiration for me.

". . . . . Dost thou then think that all men are of the same composition as Carlo?" whispered a voice within me, in caressing tones. "No; they are not all of the same feather. If the maxim be true that lealty in love is rare, and few are those who find it, still the existence of the virtue is proved by thy own sincerity; and it will be enough to make a second trial to prove it. A gaze which possesses the power to disturb thee to

thy very innermost, may it not be the messenger of love and pity?"

Heated by my imagination, my heart warmed anew, whilst reason, subjugated by my feelings and stripped of every resource, was silent, leaving the soul naked to the fascination.

CHAPTER III.

JEALOUSY.

In allusion to the traditional system of demoralization by which the late fallen petty despots of our peninsula were wont to corrupt the lives and manners of their subjects, it was a saying of one of the acutest and shrewdest of German critics, not long since summoned from the field of letters, that the "Maestro" Gioacchino Rossini was the only statesman in Italy.

Heine thus defined the instincts of the Latin race with a depth of insight which he failed to employ in the examination of the German character. He resided in Naples, and closely studied the overwhelming prevalence of "melomania" in the Neapolitans.

It was also a saying that any crowned head a disciple of Macchiavelli could have governed "comme il faut" the people of Southern Italy with three F's—Festa, Farina, Forca—with Balls, Bread, and the Gallows: the first for his nobility, the second for the

lazzaroni, the third for bearded liberals. Bread was a scarcity now and then, but the fête and the gibbet have amused the Neapolitans without any dearth.

The "Festa," the primary and constituent element of Bourbon rule, may be divided into three species—the sacred Festa, the court Festa, and the profane Festa. It was again subdivided into five principal secretaries of state, viz. ecclesiastical solemnities (inseparable from saints, prodigies, and the pyrotechnic art), balls, theatres, concerts, and the carnival. There were gala days, in which, if the prince in his palace danced, every faithful subject who was not a reverend or gouty was called on to put his legs in motion. And during the last days of the carnival, when His Majesty having donned his mask and costume, mounted his gilt car, and thrown right and left of the Toledo the abundance of his royal munificence in the form of sugared shot, what an honour it was for every loyal and devoted subject to receive full in the face at least one charge of that grape in commemoration of the bombardment which saved Naples, the throne, and the Church, from the infernal pestilence of liberalism!

Provincial "bon ton" consisted in a servile imitation of the corruption of the metropolis.

As I have said, the Calabrian youth (infected too with that fatuity which varnished over the iron rule of that period) were wholly occupied in the consideration of their carnival costumes, and our house never failed

to attract a gay and crowded assemblage from which Domenico never absented himself. My mother had perceived his attentions, and she now reproved me sharply for corresponding to this affection.

After the lapse of a few days the grandfather of Domenico presented himself at our house, and formally made a demand of my parents of my hand in marriage for his grandson.

They naturally asked why his father had not come to make this proposal. The grandfather candidly replied that, Domenico's father not approving of the union (as he had another wife in view for him), he himself, urged by the entreaties and even tears of his grandson, whom he loved affectionately, and whom it was his intention to constitute his heir, had undertaken the charge, telling his father that he wished Domenico to have the wife of his choice, and ultimately hoping to acquire even his consent to it.

This equivocal proceeding only added to the violent antipathy which my mother had always conceived for Domenico. My parents could not agree to such a marriage, wanting the sanction of the father—nay, would even feel bound, should the young man seek to gain an interview, to prohibit him entering the house in future.

Neither my father nor mother ever communicated to me this offer of marriage which they had received. I learned it later from a friend of Domenico. This

latter then essayed all the means which his ardent love for me suggested to influence his father's decision, but having exhausted all, the most affectionate and convincing, he found him still inexorable to his entreaties and even tears. Some days passed over during these events, and when I saw him again he bore visible traces of having suffered intensely.

He had come to our "reunions" as usual, but had avoided directing his attentions exclusively to me. On one occasion, however, he had unfortunately seated himself on a chair on which my feet were resting—thinking that my mother could not take umbrage at this act, as she was seated close beside me, and could be privy to any conversation or act between us; but she, who was only seeking for some excuse to keep him away, found in the action a transgression of her order and a sufficient pretext for forbidding him the house.

Long and severe was her admonition to me. She accused me of disobedience in persisting to love a person with whom neither she nor my father could approve an alliance. She pointed out what she had (equally with myself) observed in him, a strongly jealous disposition, and the continual pain which this caused me.

This trait in the character of Domenico was a perpetual martyrdom to me. It was enough that any young man should sit beside me but for a moment, or utter an indifferent word to me,—I could see the expression of his countenance transformed fearfully; his eyes

became bloodshot, and the movement of his quivering lips seemed to form and convey a terrible reproach or threat to me.

Debarred from all means of communication, it was impossible to enter into explanations. It would have been most difficult for him to convey a letter to me; and the vigilance of my mother made it absolutely impossible for me to make an answer to it.

Thus, having intimated to me through a friend that if I really loved him I would not dance, how was I to satisfy him? I sat down to the piano instead. My mother approached—"This is some prohibition you have received from your lover," she cried. "Take care; I do not permit these whims. Get up and dance."

I was constrained to obey.

Domenico was furious, and I found myself in a position of painful embarrassment, to which I could see no issue.

My father, a man of unparalleled kindness of heart, had intrusted the bringing up of his daughters entirely to his wife, and never interfered in her decisions, supposing them always to be just.

During this state of things a circumstance relating to this embarrassing position of mine occurred which I do not wish to pass over in silence.

Messina, situated as is known at twelve miles' distance from Reggio, and separated from it by that strait which in the hour of storm makes the boldest seaman quail,

keeps with great pomp the 15th August (the Feast of the Assumption), together with the two preceding ones. This festival, a mixture of the sacred and the profane, of the ridiculous and the barbarous, is the great attraction of all the neighbouring populations, as well as those of the Calabrias.

Amongst many other objects of a grotesque or ridiculous character, which form the prominent feature at this religious concourse, are two gigantic figures, male and female, composed of pasteboard, and mounted on horses equally enormous, and of the same material. These hideous monsters, dressed for the occasion in some showy and coarse fabric, but always representing the prevailing fashion of the day, occupy the comments and ecstatic admiration of the crowd on the Piazza del Arcivescovado. Two men of the populace, covered with the skin of a camel, called by the people "blessed" (I know not why), make a round to vendors of every description of goods, who, as an act of devotion, put each into the mouth of this object some article of that in which they deal. This donation is stowed away on the instant in sacks, with which those within are furnished, and which they take care not to leave behind them; the collection being supposed to be devoted to the expenses of the Festa. The most striking object, however, of these solemnities consists in the following procession:—

A colossal car is dragged by a long team of buffaloes

through the irregular and ill-paved streets. Upon this are erected a great variety of objects, such as the sun, moon, and principal planets, set in rotatory motion, and diminishing proportionably in size as they approach the summit of the structure.

This erection is in itself really imposing; sumptuously decorated, and put in movement in honour of her who gave birth to the God of Charity. But its functions recall to mind the famed car of Juggernauth, or the nefarious hecatombs of the Druids. The heart sickens at sight of it, and it is difficult to refrain from crying shame upon the horrible barbarity; for, bound to the rays of sun and moon, to the circles forming the spheres of the various planets, are infants yet unweaned, whose mothers, for the gain of a few ducats, thus expose their offspring, to represent the cherub escort which is supposed to accompany the Virgin to heaven.

When this huge machine has made its jolting round, these helpless creatures, guiltless of every reproach but that of being the offspring of brutal mothers, having been whirled round and round for a period of seven hours, are taken down from this fatal machine, already dead or dying. Then ensues a scene impossible to describe—the mothers struggling with each other, screaming, and trampling each other down. It not being possible, on account of the number, for each mother to recognise her own child among the survivors, one disputes with the other the identity of her infant,

amid a storm of imprecations and the lamentations of the more afflicted, joined to the deafening derision of the spectators, and the hooting of the mob. Numbers are thus changed in the confusion. The less fortunate mothers, as they receive the dead bodies of their infants, often already cold, rend the air with their fictitious lamentations, but consoled with the certainty that Maria, enamoured of her child, has taken it with her into Paradise.

Comforted with such a conviction, they enjoy themselves in making merry with the women of the neighbourhood until the whole of the money so obtained, the "price of blood," is dissipated, never doubting that the priesthood will furnish additional aid in memory of their little ones thus gloriously received into Elysium.

This Festa, then, a manifestation of one of the above-cited Bourbonic F's, was close at hand.

A large circle of our friends, together with my father and mother, agreed to pay Messina a visit. The company consisted of forty persons, and it was arranged that we should all lodge in one house. I was in great agitation, picturing to myself what disastrous news the intelligence of this amusement would be for Domenico —an amusement which must have placed me in close proximity with young men for whom Domenico felt a raging but most unfounded jealousy; one of whom, ignorant of our attachment, had even imparted to Domenico himself the admiration which I had the ill-

luck to inspire him with. Hardly had he learned this, than he gave himself up to the most terrible fits of passion, and informed me, through the usual medium, that if I went he would put an end to himself.

It was in vain that his friend observed to him that he exacted from me that which was beyond my power. It was not likely that my parents would leave me alone; nor, on the other hand, could I stand in opposition to their command. He used the most efficacious arguments to persuade him, promising him that he himself would never leave my side, and that on his return he would render him an account of my comportment in regard to his imaginary rivals.

Somewhat reassured by these promises, he preceded us in our voyage by a few hours, so that on our disembarkation in the port of Messina I observed him, at a distance, on the pier, awaiting us. He followed us, at the same distance, and having learned where we were to stay, took up a position whence, without being observed by my mother, he could command a view of the balcony of the house we occupied.

His friend faithfully kept his promise, attaching himself to me like my shadow, and making an unsurmountable bulwark of his body to all who might have wished to approach me.

The last day of the Festa seemed to me a thousand years in coming, so haunted was I with the idea of some misfortune—as this was destined to prove.

At nine o'clock of that evening, Paolo, his friend, expressed his anxious desire to go out for a few minutes to purchase some object which he much required. He had hardly descended the stairs when my mother ordered Josephine and myself to prepare to go out. It was proposed that we should sally forth to occupy the position chosen for us to see the illumination and fireworks.

"We are not all here," I observed timidly; "some of the party are wanting."

"Whoever is wanting can join us," replied my mother, in a tone which admitted of no reply.

I was silent; and making my preparations for going out as slowly as I could, watched in breathless anxiety for the return of Paolo; but he came not. I followed the party.

A voice close beside me made me start.

I looked up. It was that of the young man who had confided to Domenico his love for me, offering me his arm.

I hesitated for an instant; but at that moment caught my mother's eye fixed upon me. Fear gained the mastery over me, and I accepted his arm with a heart of anguish.

At the turn of the street I observed, notwithstanding the great crowd, Domenico approaching. We were close to each other before he had seen me, but my sister's voice caused him to look towards us.

The livid hue of the dead could not have surpassed

the cadaverous colour of his face. He quivered with rage; and, uttering some unintelligible exclamation, made a bound towards me, as if for the purpose of felling me to the ground; but as rapidly repenting this exhibition of his mad rage, or, what was as likely, finding himself without any weapon wherewith to wreak his fury on me, he darted suddenly away. I uttered a suppressed scream; but by good fortune the deafening noise in the streets overpowered it.

Domenico had left Messina within the hour in which he had thus seen me with his fancied rival, and had sought an interview with his father, to tell him that he was ready to obey him in setting out for Naples (an injunction which he had hitherto evaded), and had pledged his word to this effect.

I loved Domenico with warm affection, and was ever most careful to avoid giving him the slightest motive for jealousy; yet in his mind I passed for a heartless and inconstant lover.

His friend reproached him severely, depicting my state to him, and censuring his conduct as that of a madman. He was deeply affected, and ended with repenting the step he had taken in a moment of blind passion, but which was now irrevocable.

The words of Paolo produced a commotion within me which I could with difficulty subdue. I held counsel with myself for a moment, and then, resuming my lost energy, replied to this devoted friend—

"I will ask a last favour of you. See Domenico once more, and announce to him from me that I am the offended party; he is at liberty to go or remain as he pleases. It will be little concern of mine, who am conscious of being guiltless of that he accuses me of. May he find a woman in Naples more faithful than I!"

It was Sunday—and the day fixed for his departure was the following Tuesday.

On that night we had severally retired to our apartments, and I had been an hour in bed without having been able to close my eyes, when a low deep murmur struck my ear. This unusual sound struck me with terror. I raised my head and tried to sit up, but a violent shock threw me back upon the pillow. Then succeeded a prolonged vibration of the doors and windows. At this all were roused. My sister jumped out of bed. I did the same, and I tottered hither and thither. We ran to our parents' rooms, who told us to dress ourselves as well as we could, and fly to the square which was contiguous to our house. We had hardly time to put on a dressing-gown, when a second shock threw us both to the ground. Rushing out, we found my father waiting for us near the staircase. My mother held one of the children in her arms. She desired me to take up the other, and to follow her. On reaching the street I transferred the infant to one of the servants, whilst I endeavoured to arrange my very imperfect dress.

My hair, in the hurry and confusion, had become

undone and lay loose on my back and shoulders. I felt it gently touched, and, turning round, beheld Domenico.

"I, at least," he whispered to me, "must cry blessings on the earthquake which gives me the chance of seeing you once more—were it even but to say farewell. I will return in a month."

The firm tone of this promise contrasted with the oscillating ground, which quivered beneath our feet under the impulse of this terrible phenomenon. The inhabitants flew in all directions from their houses. The noise of chimneys precipitated to the ground, the yelling and the prayers of the multitude, the howling of dogs and the crowing of cocks, deafened the air. The confusion reached even to the birds, which, terrified by the catastrophe and abandoning their hiding-places, flew hither and thither above our heads, uttering shrill and plaintive cries. In fine, it was a scene of universal terror, confusion, and ruin, not easily effaced from the memory.

My father ordered two of our carriages to be brought out without the horses, that we might sit in them. I got into one of them together with him, taking also the infant with me. My mother, with my sister and the second child, occupied the other.

Domenico approached my father and saluted him. He received him most courteously, and they remained in conversation on various topics for nearly an hour,

during which the shocks succeeded each other incessantly. When Domenico saw the day beginning to break he took his leave, wishing to start before sunrise.

As he passed near the carriage which my mother occupied he saluted her likewise. She called him.

"Is it true, Signor Domenico, that you leave Reggio this morning?"

"In half-an-hour I embark."

My mother detaining him with another question, he summoned courage to address her in these words:— "I leave in obedience to my father. In a month I return; and then, with or without his consent, I will renew through my grandfather my demand in marriage of your daughter's hand. I implore you not to refuse me, having now seen that nothing has availed to diminish the warm attachment we bear to each other."

"Well, we will speak of it on your return," was the hopeful reply. She gave him her hand, which he kissed, as he had done that of my father.

CHAPTER IV.

MOURNING.

I AM fain to believe that each of us reckons some ill-omened date in his life, some one critical event of sinister remembrance, which marks the starting-point of an uninterrupted succession of subsequent disasters. The ill-starred hour of my life was marked on the horoscope in the midst of this terrible and inauspicious night, in which the chaos of the elements threatened to destroy Reggio and the other cities of Calabria.

Other sorrows beyond those inevitable ones which our first love brings with it I had as yet not felt, and every woman knows the sweet and abundant recompense with which these are tempered. From this hour every joy was silent for me; my horizon darkened around me; my laugh was no longer joyous. From this point commences my sad story, *inde lachrymæ!*

Five days and as many nights were passed thus out of the house; two small rooms were constructed of wood in the little fort by the seashore, and we took up our residence in these.

On the sixth day we returned to our house, not because the danger had entirely ceased, but because my father experienced a state of general indisposition, attributed to his sleeping in great discomfort and deprived of those aids necessary to a man who had now reached his seventieth year. I loved, adored this father with no ordinary devotion; loved him far beyond my mother, and not without just reason. There are parents who, not content to adopt an unjust preference for one or more of their children, have moreover the imprudence to make undisguised manifestation of this among their family. My mother (with sorrow do I thus charge her memory) was not free from this weakness, and prone, through I know not what instinct, to domestic preferences, she would never adopt the charitable care to conceal these from the eyes of the less loved. She showed great partiality in her affection for her children, and unfortunately I was not amongst the number of these favourites; and no day passed that ever-renewed and evident proof did not convince me of this. My father, on the other hand, had compensated me for my scanty portion of the maternal fondness by doubling his own for me. On one evening he had entered the drawing-room

somewhat earlier than usual, and was occupying his accustomed seat. Having terminated my toilet operations for the theatre, I sat down to the piano until the time for our departure for this should arrive. Whilst I was singing I heard him sigh deeply. Attributing this to some uncomfortable thought momentarily saddening him, I did not interrupt my music.

A second sigh from him, followed by an almost inaudible prayer, caught my ear. I rose instantly, and, going up to him, inquired what so distressed him.

"I am not distressed," he replied; "I feel infirm, and am sorry I have not strength to accompany you to the theatre."

"Can it be possible that the thought of our amusement can occupy you at such a moment?" I cried; and hastily taking the ornaments from my hair, I deposited them on a chair. I called my sister, who did the same, and who then went to summon my mother.

We led him back to his bedroom, and despatched a messenger for his medical attendant, who was unable at that period to enlighten us on the gravity of his illness. We all remained with him during the night, and on the following morning the most eminent professors were summoned in consultaion on his case.

This, though declared serious, was not yet pro-

nounced desperate. Four days passed, and the malady still held the mastery. On the seventh they announced that their efforts to save him were fruitless, and that it was now our duty to administer to him the last consolations of religion.

Those alone who have been deprived of a beloved parent in whose affection they had concentrated the sum of their happiness, present and future, can to the full comprehend the violence of my grief. The last offices of religion shed from the death-bed tapers over the future of the orphan a reflection so sombre that no sun can ever avail to dissipate it.

They drew us to a distant room, that we might give free vent to our overwhelming grief whilst the confessor prepared and administered the sacraments, which he received with angelic resignation.

This mournful ceremony completed, we pleaded for readmittance. My face had undergone such transformation from grief, that those surrounding his bed made a sign to me not to approach it. I sank on a chair near the door, suppressing with difficulty every evidence of my presence.

In a few minutes he made an effort to raise himself, and pronounced my name. Almost suffocated by my sobs and tears, I answered with difficulty—

"I am standing by you, dear father."

"Do you know that I have received the sacrament?"

"I know it."

"I die in peace; but your fate, my child, weighs heavily upon me. What will become of you?"

Prophetic words, which, in the later vicissitudes of my life, never ceased to echo in my ears, and follow me at every step.

He called my mother, and in ill-assured accents addressed her: "Take these poor children away; their sight distracts me. They lose their father before they have gained a husband who could protect and cherish them. In these last moments it is my duty to think of God, and to intrust to his protection what remains."

My mother made signs to us to approach. We knelt, and, extending his trembling hands, he uttered feebly his benediction and his last words.

At sunset the confessor entered our room. His presence there and his silence announced that we had no longer a father.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLOISTER.

MARIA THERESA of Austria, the second wife of the king, had given birth to the Prince Luigi, Count of Trani, and orders had been issued for the celebration of this event by three days of festivity.

The funeral obsequies of my father, which should have been performed with military honours, in consideration of his rank as marshal, and also from his having been governor of the province, could not therefore take place during that period.

The body was therefore embalmed, and we delayed the ceremony until this term had passed over.

In losing our father we had lost all. We were therefore necessitated to address ourselves to his Majesty, to remind him of his long services, in order to obtain a pension for my mother.

At that period there was little steam traffic between Sicily and Calabria, and we were therefore obliged to

take advantage of the departure of a vessel which passed between Messina and Naples on the second day after the death of my father. We were thus necessitated to leave his remains, still unconsigned to the grave, in the care of our relatives, and, bidding a sorrowful adieu to our elder sisters, who resided there, my mother, with Josephine and myself, shedding tears of bitter affliction, set sail at daybreak on the morning of the 29th September, and in little more than twenty-four hours we reached Naples.

This unlooked-for catastrophe unexpectedly brought me near Domenico once more. I was, however, sure that on account of our precipitate departure there had been no time to receive the tidings of the overwhelming misfortune which had befallen us.

On the day following our arrival Josephine and I were sitting at the window. She was the first to recognise Domenico, who was passing. We opened the window, and went out on the balcony to attract his attention.

He stopped in utter bewilderment, and looked fixedly at us; the mourning we were dressed in seemed to confound him. But my mother approaching at the same moment, he understood then that we were fatherless.

He entered a shop, and, tearing a leaf from his pocket-book, addressed a request to my mother for admittance, that he might learn the calamity which

had befallen us. This was granted, and in the next moment he was in our presence. He remained in conversation a long time, and on taking leave said that our bereavement, far from altering his sentiments towards me, should be a cause rather to hasten our union; that as soon as we had arranged our affairs, and returned to Reggio, he would follow us thither, and take advantage of his right to protest, in case his father still refused a consent to our union.

Many days elapsed before we could obtain an audience of the king; finally, however, my mother obtained the pension sought.

My sister Josephine received at this time an offer of marriage. This circumstance then retarded our return to Reggio. It was now the middle of November, and it had been arranged that this marriage should take place in the following January.

One evening Domenico came to us pale and downcast; he showed us a letter from his father which he had just received, ordering him to return forthwith, and the better to enforce his obedience to this command he had refused to send him more money. He was thus without the means of prolonging his stay in Naples.

Alas! fate thus separated us again. When was I destined to see him again? He left us after the most solemn protestations of constancy, and a promise to write to my mother every week.

Many days then passed in receiving and returning the visits of my father's friends and relations, who had not been made earlier acquainted with our arrival. The most assiduous of these was General Saluzzi, whose sister was the widow of my father's eldest brother—the Prince of Forino. Three aunts—nuns of the Benedictine Order, one of the monastery of Sta. Patrizia, and two from that of San Gregorio Armeno—were also most kind and interested in us. They had all a most marked resemblance to my dear father, but were his elders, being all three at this period past eighty years of age.

One of these aunts, she after whom I had been christened, was Abbess of San Gregorio Armeno.

Domenico wrote frequently to my mother. In these letters he announced that he had taken steps to forward this longed-for marriage, that his father showed himself still opposed to it, but that he would end by yielding to his entreaties and the ardent wish of his grandfather.

Through all this, however, could be plainly discerned that his mind was still a prey to the demon jealousy, revived by my prolonged absence. Another letter arrived from him in a few days, followed by a few lines addressed to me, and containing these words:—

"DEAR HENRIETTA—The air of Naples is unfavourable to constancy. The fascinations of that city make me uneasy on your account. Return soon if you

care for my love. If on the receipt of this you do not quickly return, I shall hold myself absolved from the promise I have made you.—DOMENICO."

My mother on reading these lines was furious; all the antipathy which she had formerly felt for the young man revived afresh, and without permitting me to return an answer, or making allowance for the suspicious disposition of Domenico, she seized her pen and wrote,—

"SIR—You would impose commands on my daughter before you have acquired the right to do so. She is not your wife, nor shall she ever be. From this moment I forbid any engagement of marriage between you."

My tears had no power to calm the fury of my mother. The letter was despatched.

Still I clung to the hope that on our return to Reggio, should he meet me again, his love for me would be rekindled, even though the cold breath of jealousy had the power to quench some of its ardour.

But my adverse star had disposed it otherwise. I fed myself on splendid hopes, whilst the gaping abyss stood open at my feet.

Christmas was at hand, and the signing of Josephine's marriage contract was to take place on the 2nd of January.

One morning my mother announced that an affair of

consequence which she could not communicate to me obliged her to go out alone, but that she would return immediately. In fact she came back after an hour's absence. I observed her attentively, and she appeared to me to be in unusual spirits. I thence conjectured that the business which had seemed so important had had a successful result; nor can I conceal the fact that I trembled in some disquietude lest it had treated (unknown to me) of some matrimonial project, whose object was definitively to separate me from the object of my thoughts.

A few days had passed over since this mysterious expedition of hers, when there was a ring at the door. As the servant was absent, I arose and proceeded to open it. A servant-maid, whom I recognised as that of my aunt the Abbess, stood there, bearing upon a tray a present of sweetmeats. At the first sight of this offering I was considerably disturbed, supposing it to be, as is the custom with many, the prelude to some treaty of marriage for me. The girl's mien, however, restored me to confidence; I breathed again.

"Are you the Signorina Henrietta?" she inquired.

I replied "Yes."

"The lady Abbess, your aunt, sends her love, and desires me to inform you that the Chapter has agreed unanimously to your admission into the convent."

"For my admission! for me! My good girl, you are in a mistake," I replied, laughing heartily.

"No, no; I am not mistaken, Signora; you are to come at once to thank the sisters, and to fix the day for your admission."

My mother, who had observed that I did not return immediately, came to see what had detained me, and at that moment overheard the concluding words of the servant. Pulling me aside, she addressed the girl—

"Very well, very well, my dear; thank my sister-in-law, and tell her that this very day I will bring her our little nun." So saying, she took me by the hand, now cold as ice, and led me back into my bedroom. Had a thunderbolt dashed me to the ground I could not have received a more terrific shock. I broke into sobs of despair, burying my face in the cushion of the sofa, which I inundated with tears, and finally threw myself on my mother's bosom, imploring pity for her child.

Imperturbable, but yet not insensible, she passed her hands over my eyelids to wipe away my tears; then with serious manner, and in measured words which still echo in my ears like a sentence of death, announced to me that she had been constrained to fix my entrance into the convent from the circumstances both of her own straitened means as well as my caprice for Domenico. "Your aunts," she continued, "are rich; in consigning you to their care I am relieved of a heavy charge until I can receive my pension."

She promised to take me back in two months in case my repugnance to the cloister was not diminished

by the kindness of the nuns—adding that she could not now retract, she herself having had the Chapter convened.

"Mama!" I exclaimed, throwing myself at her feet and convulsively embracing her knees—"Mama, for mercy sake do not shut me up! the very name of convent brings me to despair."

She stood up suddenly, and, freeing herself from my embrace, spoke in severe and determined tone—

"Your father has left neither dower nor guardian for you; I alone have the disposal of your fate. All laws, human and divine, enjoin obedience on you; and, by my faith, you shall obey."

I suppressed, as a last sign of protest, my sobs, and remained silent; any further effort would have been a mere waste of words. If ever under the Bourbon rule the god of silence was the tutelar deity of the orator and the philosopher, how much rather should it be for the young orphan girl, abandoned, and moreover a minor!

Seeing me dumb, petrified, with clasped hands and upraised eyes, the most profound consternation expressed in my whole bearing, my mother at last seemed moved to some compassion for her child, and in softer accents and caresses she commenced exhorting me in a tone more consonant with maternal love. The convent, she said, was not a prison as the world generally represented it, but an asylum of salvation, a

pure abode where souls superior to social vanities, or satiated with the disenchantments of life, find an atmosphere uncontaminated with the breath of mundane passions, and beyond the storms of the age. Moreover, in those asylums would be found in abundance, not only spiritual consolations, but all the comforts, the refinements, and even the harmless recreations of an elegant society. If such were not the case, how should it be that so many hundreds of the daughters of the most illustrious families of Naples should seek refuge there, all bringing to them dowers of considerable amount? In fine, that my entrance in the cloister would be only a brief trial of two months, at the expiration of which I should, if I then wished it, infallibly recover my liberty, to make what use of it I might wish. This, and still more, was her exhortation.

It had been a question of taking me to the convent during the course of the day, but the state of my eyes, swollen to a frightful extent, impeded this intention.

On the ensuing day, seeing that it was useless to wait for the cessation of my tears, I was ordered to get myself ready; my mother at one moment breaking out into reproaches, at another into encouragement, saying, "Rest assured I will certainly come to fetch you back in two months."

On leaving the carriage at the door of the

convent I ascended in grievous depression the first staircase, which leads to a second, that of the Clausura. The portress, on opening the above-mentioned door, having rung a bell to announce to the sisterhood the arrival of the victim, my aunt, being at that moment in the portress's room, was the first to arrive. In great satisfaction she embraced me, and, in a tone of affable command, whispered me to thank the sisters for the favour they had done me in accepting me as their companion. The revered features and voice of my father, repeated in the countenance and accents of the Abbess, produced such an impression on me that I thought I should have fallen lifeless.

In the mean time the nuns had gathered round in a crowd to look at me, peering over each other's heads for this purpose, those altogether in the rear mounting upon chairs to stare at me.

My mother returned thanks for me. She said that the death of my father, and the separation from my family, were the cause of the affliction I appeared to be in. On this head the nuns had begun already in no subdued tones to make their comments, as they had also done on my person generally.

One said I was pretty, another that she thought me plain; this one that I seemed amiable, that one that she was sure I was the reverse; some said that I was tall, others that I was short, &c. I felt humiliated,

oppressed, and acknowledged to myself that I would rather die than enter a place whose text-book of good breeding promised even on its title-page so little.

My mother's speech, which was not long, though copiously seasoned with compliments to the sisterhood in my name, was interrupted by the entrance of another of my paternal aunts, whose name was Lucretia. She entered supported by two lay sisters. She had attained an age verging on ninety, but with impaired intellects; in fact, was in a complete state of dotage.

The 4th of January was the day appointed for my incarceration, two days after the signing of Josephine's marriage contract.

Arrived at home again, I refused to eat, and until the fatal day came I never ceased weeping.

My father's relatives made the most magnanimous efforts to persuade my mother not to sacrifice me. She answered that placing me in a convent of noble ladies for two months was certainly not desiring to sacrifice me.

In fact, her intention at the time went no farther than this.

The Princess of Forino offered to take me to reside with her during these two months, and her sons pledged themselves to bring about a marriage for me with the Duke of ——, a distant relative, at that time a widower. My mother declined the Princess's

courteous offer, and told my cousins that on her return from Calabria they would speak of this marriage.

General Saluzzi, a connexion and brother officer of my father, and who felt an almost paternal affection for me, gave me the assurance that, whatever should be my lot in life, he would make me a gift of 1000 ducats.

The evening of the 2nd January, which had been fixed on for the betrothal of Josephine, arrived. I accompanied her, but in tears. Inseparable are these from my drama; they saddened the whole ceremony. Fatal presage for a wedding!

At last the morning of the 4th dawned; it was Saturday. I dressed myself almost without knowing what I was doing. It was the fashion at that period to wear the hair in ringlets, and mechanically I was arranging mine in this manner; my mother's voice arrested my fingers.

"What are you doing?" she cried. "That is not a proper style of hair-dressing for a convent; you should wear it plain."

Irritated beyond measure, I made answer, "But I am certainly not going to a convent to become a nun. I do not intend to change my mode of dressing it merely to stay for two months there."

"I do not desire that you should become one," she replied, "and you know it; but the Abbess enjoined

me not to bring you to-day with your hair in ringlets, lest the nuns should call you a coquette." In so saying she took a comb and arranged it in bands. I made no further resistance, for I had no strength to raise my arm.

In a little time General Saluzzi arrived, and also the daughter-in-law of the Princess of Forino, both of whom were to accompany me.

The long distance which lay between the Madonna delle Grazie in the Toledo and the convent of San Gregorio Armeno was traversed by me in a condition which partook of stupor and a state of trance. I seemed to be bound in the torments of a horrible nightmare. The most cherished memories of the past rushed into my mind—a past which was on the brink of separating itself from me for ever. The innocent amusements of childhood shared with companions more fortunate than myself — the tender caresses of my father, and his last fatal words of commiseration—the image of my lover. Alas! this remembrance above all recurred again and again, and shut out all that went on around me. My mother had taken the precaution to cover my face with a thick veil, that my tears should not become a public spectacle, but the constant application of my handkerchief to my eyes attracted the attention of the passers by.

I reached the fatal spot—the door was opened—the monster's jaws received me. I felt myself seized by

the hands, dragged upwards, and then pushed along by the shoulders—the ribbon of my bonnet untied—and, lastly, heard the grating bolts of the horrible portal again pushed to; and when I could distinguish objects, I found myself on my knees before a high gilded lattice.

It was the choir.

A nun was repeating to me—

"Return thanks to God for the favour of having conducted you to a holy place."

I made no answer—I returned no thanks. My reason, which had wavered for a while, having been fully restored to me, one sad thought beset it.

The prophetic words of my father's death-bed—alas! too soon fulfilled.

CHAPTER VI.

DESERTION.

On leaving the choir I was conducted round the convent.

Two young nuns, sisters, whose names were Concettina and Checchina, accompanied me. I had need of air and distraction, and accepted their invitation to show me what was remarkable in the convent.

I asked for my mother, and was told that, not wishing to detain the Countess and the General, she had left me, but would not fail to return on the following day.

The visit commenced with the temple consecrated to S. Gregorio the Illuminator. It had been asserted by competent archæologists that the pavement of that church had been the site of the ancient Temple of Ceres, which, together with that of the Dioscuri, with the vast theatre and the Basilica, circumscribed the Augustan square, which is now occupied by the im-

mense church and convent of San Lorenzo Maggiore. This, however, is an error. The position is not applicable to the present church, which was built on an entirely different site when the ancient one was demolished in consequence of the decree of the Council of Trent, which, towards 1580, obliged the nuns to subvert the old order of things, and give a very different disposition to the interior of the building, according to the rules regulating the severity of the modern cloister. The legend relates that the Temple of Ceres, converted into a Christian sanctuary by the pious wife of Constantius Chlorus, was surrounded by large edifices, and dedicated to San Pantaleone. This, too, is equally erroneous; if my memory serves me rightly, that Eastern saint flourished after the reign of Constantine the Great. That which is known for certainty belongs to later times, and has special reference to the Iconoclastic persecution which broke out in Constantinople under the rule of the Greek Emperor Leo l'Isauro, that crowned Luther of the middle ages. A troop of monks and cloistered virgins then emigrated from Greece to shun the fanaticism of the clergy and the reformers. Italy was their refuge; Rome offered to the orthodox refugees a generous hospitality; and Naples, which had in common with the Greeks not only origin, and much of language and manners, but also the same rites, liturgy, and submission to the same hierarchy—Naples, I say, and the adjacent provinces, saw them-

selves within the space of a century burdened with these exiles, who, as soon as they reconstructed themselves into religious communities, erected their numberless cloisters, under the rule of St. Basil. Authors worthy of all credit relate, that in these our southern provinces alone (not including Sicily) about a thousand Greek monasteries, great and small, held sway up to the half of the fifteenth century under the above-mentioned rule.

The church and monastery of which I speak boast of an antiquity above all the others of the same order which have been founded in Naples, and had for patron San Gregorio Armeno, because the fugitive nuns, who had fixed their abode there, brought with them the relics of this Armenian saint. The fall of the Greek empire, occasioned by the conquest of Mahomet II., and the subjugation of the Byzantine Patriarchate, which was the religious head of it, put an extinction to the character as well as the Oriental rite which the Basilian order had up to this point preserved in Italy. But, for reasons not sufficiently known, the nunneries abandoned the rule of St. Basilio, to embrace the other, not very dissimilar, of St. Benedict, even before the monks of the Basilian rule had all been Latinized, an event which took place after those three formidable and consecutive crises of the Western Church—the Reformation, Jesuitism, and the Council of Trent. These took place in the sixteenth century.

In the façade of the church of San Gregorio, upon an elevated basement with three arches, two other orders are raised, the Composite upon the Doric. A few steps lead to the spacious vestibule with four columns, upon which rests the grand choir of the nuns; at the end is the principal entrance of the church, which contains a single nave with four chapels on each side, and two vacancies of equal size to that of the chapels, occupied in front by two organs; one of these vacancies serves as passage to the sacristy and one of the lesser doors, the other for the confessionals. A balustrade divides the nave from the presbytery, where stands the high altar, between four arches of similar construction which sustain the cupola.

The entire architecture is Composite, but superabundantly loaded with ornament—cornice, foliage, and decoration of all kinds, all gilt, and in the plain or flat gilt portion damascened; and where there is no gilding, the space is painted in fresco; all which things are more the belongings of the sumptuousness of rich baronial palaces or theatres than the religious simplicity of the Lord's house. The large door is of walnut sculptured with admirable reliefs of the four Evangelists; and in the centre the two saints, Stephen and Lawrence, surrounded with ornamental work. The ceiling, which is of carved wood and gilt, is divided into three principal compartments, in which are encased three pictures, by Teodoro il Fiammingo, re-

presenting St. Gregory with an open volume in his hands, between two assistants, at the altar; the same saint receiving the nuns into his order; and the Baptism of the Redeemer. The two organs, situated, together with the orchestras, in the two vacant spaces, are overloaded with the most bizarre reliefs, gilt with refined gold. The chapels are adorned with mosaic of choice and varied marble, and all have a balustrade of marble, of the same mosaic composition, in raised and perforated foliage; above this ornaments of bronze; and in the middle a small gate of the same design and metal.

Of the paintings, the three which stand above the door—in which are represented the arrival and the reception which the Greek nuns received in Naples,—those placed between the windows representing facts in the life of St. Gregory, those in the lesser compartments above the arches, the others of the cupola, and finally those of the grand choir—all which represent the history of St. Benedict,—are all from the hand of Luca Giordano. And I may remark, that of the three pictures above the entrance, in that which is on the left of the spectator, in the head of the individual in the act of pointing out a spot to the nuns, who have just reached the shore in a boat, the painter has represented his own portrait at the age of fifty, the age he had then attained.

Behind the high altar, which is constructed after the

designs of Dion Lazzari, stands the large picture of the Ascension of our Lord, the work of Bernardo Lama. In the first chapel on the right is a picture of the Annunciation, remarkable for its fine colouring, painted by Pacecco de Rosa. The third chapel is dedicated to St. Gregorio Armeno, and is both larger and more decorated than the others. Upon the altar and between two columns of red marble is a much-esteemed painting by Francesco de Maria, representing the sainted bishop seated and surrounded by angels. Upon the lateral walls are figured, in two compositions, the Saint, whilst King Thiridates advances in an attitude of humiliation, his face transformed into that of a hog; and in the other, at the moment of his being drawn forth from the Lake of Ararat, where he had dwelt with much suffering for fourteen years. These two pictures, painted with much force, truth of colour, and beautiful effect of light, are due to the pencil of Francesco Fracanzano, a disciple of Spagnoletto. The ceiling of this chapel is divided into several compartments, in which, in much smaller dimensions, are represented various acts of the life of San Gregorio, by the abovementioned Francesco de Maria. These frescoes are said to have called forth the admiration and praise of Giordano. In the fourth chapel, the painting of the Madonna of the Rosary is from the hand of Niccolo the Melancholy, a scholar of Giordano. Of the chapels on the left, the first has an oil-painting

of the Nativity, of the school of Marco di Siena; the third a picture of the Beheading of the Baptist, by Silvestro Morvillo, surnamed Bruno; the fourth, St. Benedict worshipping the Virgin, who appears above, attributed to Spagnoletto.

On the morning of the 3rd of March, 1443, being Sunday, King Alfonzo I. of Aragon placed on his son Ferrante's head a circlet of gold, and in his hand a sword whose hilt was embossed with gems, thus confirming him as Duke of Calabria, and his successor to the kingdom, as the day previous he had been proclaimed in full convocation of the Parliament in the hall of the Chapter in San Lorenzo. This ceremony was conducted with regal pomp in the presence of the barons and the whole court, in the old church above mentioned as having been demolished.

In that same church were preserved, up to the year 1574, the burial-places of the nuns, and the bones of other defunct, in tombs which bear dates from the earliest period of the monastery, according to the chronicle of Dame Fulvia Caracciolo, one of my ancestors, and a nun in the above monastery, who lived about the period at which the cloister was first introduced. She leaves a moving picture of the transposition of these remains from the ancient church to a locality of greater security during the abbesship of Lucrezia Caracciolo. "There was nothing," she writes, "in the church save these vaults which contained the bodies of the defunct

sisters, and, since they remained uncovered, it smote our hearts sorely that we had no spot wherein we might bestow the bones of our predecessors, the more so, as many of these bodies were of fresh date, and to displace which (for the bodies were entire) was such grief to us that each of us felt on the point of fainting. At last, on the night of the 20th of October of the said year 1574, not to infuse horror and terror among the sisters, I, together with Donna Beatrice Carafa, Donna Camilla Fersala, Donna Isabella and Donna Giovanna di Loffredo, having first secured the doors of the church, and reciting the service for the dead, caused the vaults to be emptied in our presence, using every possible despatch that they should be well cleaned, replaced the bones in another vault, observing the same disposition. We caused as many coffins to be constructed as there were biers, and, replacing in those the above bones, we affixed an inscription on each for recognition." This passage, which I have read more than once in the above manuscripts, has made me each time shudder at the thought that my bones, destined to remain in the care of my companions in seclusion, might be subjected to similar transportation.

It is also through this chronicle that we have our information of the ancient style of dress of the Benedictine nuns, and their offices, out of the Longobardo books. "Anent then the mode of dress we used, I will say that we were attired in white, with tunics however

shaped like a sack, precisely like those worn by widowed women, but of the finest and whitest material. On the head we wore a Greek bandage, disposed with great modesty.

"We read out of ancient Lombard books, and thus spent the greater part of our lives in reciting the Holy Office, it being at this time recited at great length and with much solemnity by us. When the nuns professed, the ceremony was performed on three different days and in three different modes. First they were professed by the hand of the Abbess a day after the celebration of vespers, when the hair was cut off. After some months or years, according to their age, they took the second step, which gave them some rank in the choir. The third step was taken at the full age, from fifteen upwards, and on the taking of which the mass of the Holy Ghost was performed, and whilst that was repeated the hair was again cut. In this operation we cut the hair in the form of a garland round the head, disposed in seven tresses, at the extremity of each of which the Abbess attaches a pellet of white wax; and we remained thus until after the celebration; but this terminated, the Mother cut off these tresses and covered the head with a white veil, and we placed over the white a black garment, having till then worn only the former; the black being half a hand's-breadth shorter than that beneath it. Without this it was not permitted to appear in the choir on festas, and the

wearers of this dress had the prerogative of an active and passive in the affairs, and a participation in the goods of the monastery. We wore this same dress on the last days of our life; we died and were buried in it. On burial-days we officiated in the choir cloak, without which the shortest prayer could not be repeated, and this was sedulously observed by us at that period."

In spite of these rigorous rules, it is yet true that the nuns of that period passed freely from one to the other of the different residences and possessions of the monastery, to take up their abode there for several weeks at a time. They went out from the morning to the evening through the permission of the Abbess, and remained for days, and even months, in their parents' house, as is practised, to the honour of the monastic order, in the cloister of the Greek Church, even up to our day. With them the authority of the canons of Trent are not recognised.

Various relics of saints and martyrs, to which the monkish and vulgar superstition attributes the power of miracles, are preserved. Besides the head of St. Gregory the Illuminator, said to be brought over by the nuns in their flight, are those of St. Stephen and St. Blaise, covered with silver; a portion of the true cross; one arm of St. Pantaleone, another of St. Lawrence; the chain of St. Gregory Armeno, and the straps of leather with which the saint was scourged—both ob-

jects, through supernatural prerogative, said to possess the power of healing the possessed; the blood of St. Stephen and that of St. Pantaleone, which, if in a state of perpetual liquefaction, is nevertheless not seen of different colours, as that of the same martyr, which is worshipped in the church of Santa Maria in Vallicello, and in the cathedral of Amalfi. This sacred anatomical cabinet gives occasion to festivals which do not fail to be marked by miraculous events.

The convent constructed round the church is of immense extent. On entering by the external entrance we perceive a commodious staircase, which leads to a second door, over which are some chiaroscuro paintings by Giacomo del Po, and which gives entrance to the different *Parlatorii* (reception rooms). Rich in ornament, inexhaustible in conveniences, of princely magnificence, is the interior of the convent, the abode of women sufficiently elevated in the nobility of their lineage not to admit within their congregation a maiden who cannot reckon a descent from one of the four patrician stocks of Naples. Extensive and beautiful is the part allotted to the dormitories, not less so the refectory. The choir, which joins the church, is of great space; the cloister of great extent, with a fountain in the centre, and two statues—Christ and the Samaritan woman—sculptured by Matteo Battiglieri; immense and charming terraces, raised above the convent, adorned with flowers and paintings, and from

whence one of the most beautiful views of Naples is enjoyed, extending over the adjacent hills and mountains, over the part of the city which lies beneath, over the sea, and the charming environs.

Besides these, there is to be seen in the monastery the chapel of Santa Maria dell' Idria (corruption of the Greek word Odigitria), containing the Byzantine image of the Virgin, worshipped under this title; paintings by Paolo de Matteis; a chapel sumptuous in the extreme. Finally, the Hall of Archives, where, amongst the other historical monuments, is preserved the above mentioned chronicle of the Caracciolo family, a document of considerable value.

But it is time to return to the vicissitudes of my own lot.

The novelty of the placè, of the persons—the various and numerous objects in it—the costumes—served to distract me in some degree. It was for me a new world, as yet entirely unknown.

During our progress we encountered many of the sisters, one and all of whom put the invariable question to me—

"Are you going to take the veil?"

I answered "No."

"Ah! when you have once got San Benedetto's flannel on, you will never get it off again," was the rejoinder to this, accompanied by a smile of supreme conviction.

A few days prior to my entrance into the convent, my aunt's servant came one evening with the communication to me that a young sister, named Paolina, had desired to become my confidante and inseparable companion as soon as I should have entered the convent. I had now been many hours there, and had observed no other near me but the two sisters who had accompanied me on my visit, and who had been appointed by my aunt to this office. Of these I now inquired which was the nun named Paolina.

They replied that she was a young nun who was always in the society of two of the pupils.

I then remembered having observed her walking in company with two such, and that she had rather excited my astonishment in having been the only one who had not accosted or even saluted me.

Proceeding for some short distance along the arched corridor of the ground-story, we again encountered her. I smiled as she passed; and had the mortification to perceive, as I did so, that, instead of responding to it, she and her companions were passing some sneering remark in an under-tone between them.

Concettina then asked of me why I had inquired for this nun, and where I had known her.

I related the message above alluded to. The sister then remembered that Paolina, having had a fall-out with her friends, had, in order to annoy them, sent me that message; but that, since having made it up with

them, she had made them a promise that she would never come near me—as they were already jealous of me.

"Jealous!" I exclaimed, perfectly thunderstruck. "Are there, then, jealousies here?"

"Not a doubt of it; it would not be this place if there were not," repeated the sisters in chorus.

"Woe is me!" I added; "then must there be the discords which are inseparable from these; and pestilential must be the discords of a house hermetically sealed and shut up from the beneficial influences of the rest of humanity!"

I soon became aware that my intercourse lay with women who, though noble by birth, had received but negative training in all that regarded the noblest attributes of the soul. I had waited for night with much longing, that I might give free vent to my grief—imagining that I should have a room to myself. I was however, to my disappointment, shown my bed in the room of my aunt the Abbess; and, by the side of mine, that of her maid. Thus was I again denied the relief of my tears. When my aunt had got into bed she began to recite her prayers in an under-tone, and I had to tolerate the tiresome and frivolous questions of the maid.

This woman, whose name was Angela Maria, was from 30 to 32 years of age, of an iron frame, undersized and stout, with large mouth and discoloured

teeth; moreover, deeply pitted with the smallpox. Superadded to these unprepossessing traits was a habit at one moment of laughing immoderately, at another of scowling fixedly, whilst a pair of large eyes, which seemed ready to start from her head, kept in incessant motion,—unmannered, inattentive to my old aunt, and petulant whenever this latter interrupted her incessant chattering with some order.

At last she got into bed and soon fell asleep, and then I could give free scope in silence to my sad thoughts.

After the few hours of sleep which my very weariness yielded me, I was roused by Angela Maria before day-break, to ask me if I would attend the first or the second mass. Had this been done by my own maid, I should have read her a lecture; but overcome by the moral depression which hung heavily on me, I made no resistance. I answered then with a sigh—

"Whichever you please."

Making me dress, and taking me familiarly by the hand, in the manner she would lead a blind person, she conducted me down to the Communion, where I found certain of the nuns hearing mass and receiving the sacrament.

At 10 o'clock my mother arrived. I was summoned, and found her in the parlour. On seeing her I wept bitterly, and told her I felt most wretched in a place compared to which imprisonment would be lesser suffer-

ing to me; the greatest martyrdom I could endure would be to be made to live with people of no mind or education; that they already spoke of making me a nun, and I was already dependent on the will and pleasure of my aunt's maid.

My mother was about to reply, when the portress entered, ushering in some of the nuns who wished to pay their respects to her. After a few minutes' conversation with them, she expressed her desire to go and hear mass in the neighbouring church of San Lorenzo, saying she would return when it was over. She left the parlour, and I remained outside, pacing up and down the corridor waiting for her. An hour passed—an hour and a half—without her return. Disappointed at her delay, I addressed the portress, requesting her to send one of the numerous women who were about the door of the convent to the church of San Lorenzo to see what caused my mother to tarry.

The portress took hold of my hand. "Don't be vexed, my dear," she said. "Your mother has gone, and does not intend to return."

I was petrified. I knew she was to leave me, but not on the very day after she had shut me up, and that without telling me. Had the portress not supported me, I should have fallen to the ground. My nervous system, highly excitable by nature, had already received a severe shock, and this brought on a crisis. I was seized with fits.

When I had recovered my senses and reopened my eyes, I saw myself surrounded by a troop of nuns, lay sisters, pupils, all strangers to me, all intent on feeding the curiosity, idleness, or apathy, which attaches to their condition, on the spectacle of my suffering agitation. One was whispering here, another making her comments there; a third, with an expression of sarcasm, was sneering elsewhere. Not one amongst them turned on me an expression or an accent of sincere compassion.

The Doctor Rouche (one of the physicians of the convent), who at that moment entered the room, came immediately to my assistance. Fever supervened, and I was confined to my bed for a week.

When destiny is adverse, misfortunes come linked in pairs. After I had been a month in the cloister I began to believe that Domenico also had forsaken me. Up to that I had cherished the hope in this my living tomb—the sweet hope—not only to receive some intelligence from him, but even to know him returned to Naples and become my liberator. If his affection equalled mine, if generous sentiments had a place in his breast, if the voice of humanity whispered in his heart, if the remembrance of my truth and constancy had power in his soul over vile interest, how could he bear that I should fall a victim to the lealty I had sworn to him? How often have I looked for him in the church—how often, with feverish palpitating

anxiousness, looked along the street from the heights of the Belvedere—in vain! my head would sink on my breast, and I could only murmur 'He has forsaken me!' My mother never again mentioned him in her letters. I saw Josephine from time to time, but General Saluzzi was the only one whom I saw often. My other relatives—friends—lover—had already forgotten the unhappy orphan. It might be said that an abyss already severed me from the entire world in spite of those accords which still echoed in tender tones in my heart. And yet in the midst of this abandonment one sublime consolation tempered my suffering—that of raising my spirit to that God of Divine love, who was born, who lived, and died, not for the mute horrors of the desert, for the lifeless solitude, but for the salvation of humanity, bound in one vast family by a sole and indissoluble law of union.

One evening in February I was alone on the terrace; the expiring rays of the setting sun lit the summits only of Vesuvius and the heights above Castellamare, whose snows still reflected a brilliancy which retarded the approach of twilight. An unusual silence reigned around. The boisterous carnival hour had drawn the populace to the more crowded centres of the city, so that the quarter of San Lorenzo, in which the convent stood, remained altogether deserted. The distant echo of the mob's exultation, like the roar of the distant sea, was the only sound that reached my ear.

A new-felt emotion seized me—in the free air, under the spacious vault of heaven, I felt myself alone, it is true, as at first, but not isolated. The voice of our Lord called me to the contemplation of his mercy: I sank on my knees, and joined my hands in prayer—with tearful and upraised eyes I implored the Omnipotent's aid:

"Who am I?" I exclaimed, as I rose and wiped way my tears; "and what are my sufferings compared to those of the land to which I belong? If all Italy languishes under the double yoke of spiritual and temporal tyranny, shall I, an insignificant unit, look for a life of content and prosperity when so many millions groan in oppression?"

CHAPTER VII.

"THEIR REVERENCES."

BEHOLD me, then, separated for an indefinite time from that society in whose communion I had lived for twenty years, launched at one throw into the narrow limits of a negative world, in intimate and daily intercourse with nuns, monks, and priests!

Shall I take advantage of this shipwreck to point out to the readers some shoals as yet unexplored, to reveal some traits of cloister-life which, up to this hour, have remained inaccessible to all but a woman? I will make the effort.

Before resuming the thread of my narrative, in whose changing scenes clerical despotism and monastic demoralization will take a prominent part, it will not, I flatter myself, be unwelcome to the reader, to lay before him a cursory review of the ecclesiastical establishments which exist throughout our Peninsula, and more particularly those of Naples. The condition

both of the regular and secular clergy has too close a reference to my Memoirs, as well at the period at which it was my misfortune to feel its pressure, as after the national regeneration, that I should not deem it necessary to introduce here some notices adapted to throw light upon the scene in which the following episodes took place.

Conscious not less of my incompetence than of the limited nature of this work, I certainly do not intend risking any lengthened criticism on the condition, either past or present, of the clergy in Italy. My intention being only to display in a rapid review the frightful proportions of the social disease which infests our land, even to this day, I will confine myself to the authority of figures, whose positive and persuasive eloquence can prevail more on public opinion than any rhetoric. These figures being drawn from statistical tables and official documents published in the course of the last twenty years, the reader may rely upon their correctness—a correctness unblemished by the adulterations which party spirit is wont to introduce.

It is an incontestable fact, that, when we consider the extent of territory and of population, there is not a Catholic or Christian state which possesses so large a number of sees, of secular priests, of churches, of monasteries, of monks, of nuns, as are reckoned in our land. Italy, which possesses the fatal privilege of

being called the Levitical State, *par excellence*, amongst all the cultivated nations of Europe, appeared, at the conclusion of the last century, under the guise of a vast monastic congregation.

The secularizing breath of modern civilization, although driven back, and at times dispelled, by the conjoined agency of two indigenous enemies, equally adverse to the emancipation of conscience and of reason, still did not fail to penetrate, by little and little, into these regions. But, in spite of the silent revolutions of principles and customs, which, in the present and preceding centuries, had brought about the spontaneous extinction of several orders, and the fusion of many ecclesiastical establishments into one—in spite of the active assiduity with which the French occupation, at the period of the Republic, restricted within the narrowest limits possible the monstrous growth of the secular clergy, and suppressed, as well in Piedmont as in the ex-Bourbon kingdom, a vast number of monasteries (about 200 in the southern part of the Peninsula alone)—in spite of the more recent provision of the Italian Government for the gradual extinction of monachism—Italy still continues to be, as it was in the past, the Levitical land *par excellence*, and to be burdened with such an amount of prelacies and hierarchies, such a number of the regular and secular clergy, as far exceeds the wants of the nation.

Greater still is the proportion of monasteries of different orders. One of the most accredited organs of the French press remarks on this subject, in comparing its own country with Italy:—"In France, at the period above-mentioned, there were in existence 1081 abbeys, of which 800 were of men and 281 of women; 619 chapters, of which 24 were composed of the daughters of the noblesse. Let us turn to Italy. Italy, with a population of little more than twenty-four millions contrasted with the thirty-seven millions of France, is overspread by 82 religious orders and 2382 convents, which amounts to saying that, in 1864, it continues to possess double the number of convents which existed in France in 1789—a country notably more extensive and more populous.

The sum total of these 2382 convents is thus divided: 15,500 professed monks, 18,198 professed nuns, 4474 lay-friars, and 7671 lay-sisters—in all, 45,845—equal to the population of one of the lesser states of the German Confederation.

"Let us contrast also" (continues the *Débats*) "the possessions of the clergy in France in 1789, and that of the clergy of Italy. In 1864 we find it in Italy, together with corporations, bishoprics, buildings, prebendaries, possessing a rental officially calculated at 75,266,216 Italian lire (francs), whilst the French clergy were in the receipt of 133,000,000." And

its rental might be estimated without exaggeration at a fourth of the whole of France. When the decree of the 2nd of November, 1789, declared this to be national property, it was estimated at a milliard and a hundred millions.

The possessions of the Italian clergy amounted to close on two milliards, or a tenth less than the double of that possessed by the opulent clergy of one of the most opulent, powerful, and populous nations of the earth.

From special computation let us now pass to general. The following enumeration is drawn from statistical reckoning lately published in the official gazette of Naples:—The secular and regular clergy in the entire of Italy amounted, in 1857-58 to 189,800 members—*i. e.* 1 in 142 of the laity, which, in round numbers, may be thus given:—

82,000 in Naples and Sicily.
40,000 in the ex-Pontifical States.
31,900 in Central Italy.
16,500 in the ex-Sardinian States.
10,700 in Lombardia.
8,700 in the Venetian territory—equal to ⅔ of the ecclesiastical body of Rome alone, it reckoning 12,000.

Beside this, we had in Italy alone, of bishops and archbishops, 269, equivalent to little less than half of the sees of the whole of Europe, and wanting but one-third of the bishoprics of the entire Catholic world, which were from 814 to 816.

To this sum of 189,800 ecclesiastics residing in Italy, if we add that of others of the same nation who do not reside there, being distributed in different missions, and likewise the list of acolytes of the "Ordini Minori," novices, unprofessed nuns, and the class of so-called city-nuns, we shall have a total, in round numbers, of about 200,000, which is equivalent to 1 ecclesiastic in 46 adults.

The general statistic having been considered, we come, finally, to that of Naples, and the following will show how, twenty years back, the clergy was distributed in the degrees of quality and number:—

Archbishops	3
Bishops	7
Chapter of Canons of the archbishopric	30
College of the Seminarists	22
"Quarantisti" of the Metropolitan	18
Chaplains of the Royal Chapel of the Treasury of St. Gennaro	12
Chapter of Canons of St. Giovanni Maggiore	15
Rectors attached to the archbishopric of Naples	45
Royal Chaplains, Chaplains, Titulars honorary and extraordinary	34
Priests	3027
Total	3211

The number of parishes in Naples amounts to 50; that of churches to 257; of confraternities to 174; "Congreghe di Spirito," 8; chapels for night-services (Capelle Serali), 57.

As to the regular clergy, we can add a more minute list, extracted from the authorized census,

which, about the same time, was published in the work entitled 'Napoli e sua Vicinanza.' It distinguishes them by orders, by number of monasteries, by sex, by the number of individuals, and by quality.

Religious Orders—Men.		Number of Monasteries.	Number of Individuals according to			
			Monastery.		Religious Order.	
			Monks.	Novices.	Monks.	Novices.
Riformati	Of Gerusalemme a Monte Calvario	..	11	..	..	..
	Of St. Pietro ad Aram	..	94	..	..	..
	Of the Salute	5	38	..	161	..
	Of Miano	..	11	..	..	..
	Of Sta. Chiara	..	7	..	..	..
Alcantarini	Sta. Lucia del Monte	..	101	..	..	..
	St. Pasquale a Chiaja	3	49	8	197	8
	The Sanità	..	47	..	..	..
Cappuccini	Sant' Efrem Vecchio	..	25	..	..	..
	Sant' Efrem Nuovo	3	66	6	97	6
	La Trentatrì	..	6	..	..	..
Osservanti	San Francesco a Santa	..	..	..	..	..
	Maria la Nuova	2	197	7	233	7
	San Severo Maggiore	..	36	..	..	..
Agostiniani calzi.	St. Agostino la Zecca	1	41	1	41	1
Agostiniani calze.	Sta. Maria Maddalena de' Spagnuoli	..	30	..	..	..
Id. scalze	Sta. Maria della Verità	3	20	..	57	..
Id. calze	San Carlo alle Mortelle	..	7	..	..	..
Bernabiti	Caravaggio	2	10	..	..	..
	Pontecorvo		12	..	22	..

Religious Orders—Men.		Number of Monasteries.	Number of Individuals according to			
			Monastery.		Religious Order.	
			Monks.	Novices.	Monks.	Novices.
Cassinesi...	San Severino.....	..	..	..	..	..
Camaldolesi	Eremo del Salvatore	1	28	..	28	..
Canonici Lateranensi	a Santa Maria di Piedigrotta	1	16	2	16	2
Carmelitani calzi.	al Carmine Maggiore	1	35	2	35	2
Carmelitani scalze.	Santa Teresa a Chiaja	2	7	..	45	..
	Santa Teresa agli Studi		38	..		..
Certosini...	San Martino.....	1	20	3	20	3
Chierici Regolari Minori.	di San Francesco Caracciolo	1	15	7	15	7
Chierici Regolari Simplici.	Santa Maria in Portico	2	19	..	..	..
	Santa Brigida		11	6	30	6
Sacra Famiglia di Gesù Christo detta de' Cinesi		1	33	34	33	34
Padri della Missione.	Nella Casa de' Virgini	2	45	13	57	29
	San Nicola Torentino		12	16		
Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore.	S. Antonio di Tarsia	1	16	..	16	..
Minori Conventuali	San Lorenzo Maggiore	2	59	8	63	8
Iden.	Ospizio a Largo Santa Caterina a Chiaja	..	4	..	..	..
Crociferi...	Mannesi	2	9	2	15	3
	Porta San Gennaro		6	1		

Religious Orders—Men.		Number of Monasteries.	Number of Individuals according to			
			Monastery.		Religious Order.	
			Monks.	Novices.	Monks.	Novices.
Dottrinari	Casa di San Nicola de' Caserti	..	..	..	..	..
Domenicani	S. Domenico Maggiore	2	65	3	76	3
	San Pietro Martire.....		11			
Compagnia di Gesù		1	117	..	117	..
Mercedarii...	Sant' Orsola a Chiaja	1	16	..	16	..
Minimi di S. Fr. di Paola.	Largo di Palazzo.....	2	10	2	24	9
	Alla Stella		14	7		
Pii Operai	San Nicola alla Carità	2	18	1	27	1
	San Giorgio Maggiore		9			
Padri dell' Oratorio o Filippini a Gerolomini		1	28	6	28	6
Scolopi ...	San Carlo a Mortelle	1	32	..	32	..
San Giovanni di Dio.	alla Pace	2	22	3	27	3
Santa Caterina.	ad Colles	..	5	..	..	..
Chierici Regolari Teatini.	San Paolo.....	1	26	3	26	3
Congregazione del Beato Pietro da Pisa.	Santa Maria delle Grazie Maggiore	1	18	6	18	6
	Total	52	1588	176	1588	176

Religious Orders of Women.		Number of Convents.	Number of Individuals according to			
			Convent.		Religious Order.	
			Nuns.	Scholars.	Nuns.	Scholars.
Domenicane.	Santa Caterina da Siena	3	29	12	146	39
	San Giovanni		59	7		
	Sapienza		58	20		
Francescane.	San Francesco Iscariota alle Fiorentine	4	45	2	234	24
	Donna Regina		69	3		
	Santa Maria del Gesù		42	7		
	Santa Chiara		78	12		
Cappuccine	San Francesco a Pontecorvo	2	29	12	60	12
	Trentatrè		31			
Teresiane	Santa Teresa alla Salita del Vomero	1	21	..	1	21
Concezioniste.	al Divino Amore	1	35	..	35	9
Benedettine	Donnalbina	3	43	6	132	32
	San Gregorio Armeno		56	20		
	Santa Patrizia		33	6		
Sagramentiste.	Adoratrici perpetue	1	96	2	96	2
Carmelitane.	Santa Croce di Luca	1	85	10	85	10
Teatine	Suor Orsola	1	40	..	40	..
Romite	Suor Orsola	1	22	1	22	1
Canonichesse Lateranensi.	a Gesù Maria	..	..	..	..	..
Agostiniane	S. Maria Egiziaca Maggiore	3	47	7	117	31
	Santa Monica		28	13		
	S. Andrea delle Monache		44	11		
Sorelle della Carità.	Regina Cœli	2	87	160	..	..
	Costantinopoli		8			
	Total	24	1094	330	1094	330

It results, then, from the total of this census, that, at the period of my entrance into the convent, there were about 6720 individuals devoted to, or in preparation for, a life of inaction and celibacy. This number may be thus divided :—

Priests and acolytes of the "Ordini Minori" ...	3507
Monks and novices (male)	1767
Nuns	1094
Scholars (female).....	352

To which, if we add the "Sisters" scattered throughout the different "conservatorii" and retreats of the city, and the class of lay-sisters—a class celebate from the necessity of their service, if not from vows, which an approximative computation fixes at more than 2000—we have a total of 9000, representing more than 1 in 50 of the whole population of Naples, abstracted by the Church from all social co-operation and increase of the population! One in fifty! Woe is me! What epidemic, what deathly calamity, has ever thinned a people in such fearful proportion and with persisting intensity!

Three cities alone of Italy—Rome, Naples, and Palermo — contain 30,000 citizens of both sexes, strangers to the past, enemies of the present, and sterile to all the future of their country.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCENES AND CUSTOMS.

AMONG the Benedictine monasteries of Naples that of S. Gregorio Armeno was the one which at the period of my recital reckoned the largest number of professed nuns. In fact I found fifty-eight there—a few in advanced age; the greater portion young, or at least not old; and all, as I have already said, belonging to the most conspicuous, if not always to the richest, families of the ex-capital.

I had ample opportunity, however, from the first day of my entrance into the convent, to observe that the intellectual and moral condition of the sisters by no means corresponded to the elevation of their birth. Destined from the cradle, through the selfishness of unnatural parents and brothers, to bury mind, heart, and personal charms in this solitude, and immolate, less to religion than to the avarice of relatives, every affection, even to filial; to vow a solemn and irrevo-

cable renunciation of the duties and the rights which rivet the individual to family, to nation, to humanity, without regard to social dispositions, or ardent temperaments, or the inheritance of mobile feelings; brought up, through such motives, in the removal from all teaching adapted to enlarge the sphere of their ideas, to regulate and fertilize the heart and feelings; and with no earthly information beyond that of legends, miracles, visions, and the phantasmagoria of ascetics, which are found in perusal of the scanty list of religious writers which the family "Index" gives permission to open; and never finding themselves, whether it be under or beyond the paternal roof, brought in contact with an individual who may not be a close relative or her confessor; the nuns of the most illustrious of all the orders—the Benedictines—I repeat, are as much wanting in the qualities which distinguish the well-born woman, as they are destitute of those which, in other more civilized society, render the religious character so estimable. Let the historian and philosopher, who cannot find in the faded pages of the chronicler, or the depraved imagination of the sixteenth century, materials capable of reconstructing to the life that infamous era which inaugurates and shuts into Italy the foreign domination,—let him enter, if he can, into a convent of women. He will find there, in spite of the reforms of Trent, all living and palpitating still,

the morals of the age of the Borgias, the Medici, the Farnesi, the traditions of the courts of the Colonna and of Pietro de Toledo, the prejudices of the Norman and Arragonese feudalisms, the brutalized ignorance and superstitions of the populace at the epoch of the auto-da-fé. What museum of antiquities can display equal to a Neapolitan female convent—so full of life and motion—the relics of the middle ages curiously framed on the carved entablature of the era of Charles V., the pictures of the 'Divina Commedia' and of the 'Decameron' restored by the pencils of Calderon de la Barca and Cervantes?

The funeral pall of the cloister has preserved uninjured this Necropolis, as the shower of "lapilli" which fell from Vesuvius has preserved the papyri of Herculaneum and the mummies of Pompeii.

My experience confirms the judgment of the anonymous writer who, in the preface to a 'Chronique Scandaleuse' of apocryphal memory,* traced the history of the Neapolitan nunnery. Nor are the manners of Naples so reformed that these considerations of an author of bygone times may not be applicable to the present.

"At the period of the Norman domination," he writes, "the cloistral laws were introduced in all their rigour. The vows which some pious women pronounced were temporary, and were renewed every

* Chronica del Convento di S. Arcangelo a Bejamo.

year, with the choice of selecting another state which might better suit them. These women then lived in a kind of religious freedom, which united, as in the case of the German Canonesses, the advantages of society to the regulations of a pure and edifying life. They bore the title of Oblate * (presented), lived at a certain distance from the world, and could re-enter it at any moment they felt desire to do so. The absence of all contact with the world was no source of irritation to either senses or imagination. Far from shrinking at the idea of solitude, it caused them to contemplate with pleasure the possibility of returning to the world."

The interior of such a convent then was for such reasons an abode of respectability and order, where reigned that sweet serenity which accompanies Christianity, a poetical type of morality, and a quality inestimable amongst women. In the absence of a more tender sentiment, confidence and friendship abode amongst these women, whose virtues would have rejected every mundane passion.

An individual wishing to take up her residence in this retreat was bound to maintain herself at her own expense, until such time as, manifesting a desire to adopt their mode of life, she came to the resolution to inscribe herself amongst the Religieuses supported by the establishment, when she received all that was

* Offered or presented to Mary.

necessary to her maintenance. The direction of the whole was intrusted to the most prudent and experienced of the ladies of the convent, the king confirming this free choice under the guarantee of his Grand Almoner.

During the reign of the House of Anjou these ladies were models of every virtue, joined to talents the fruit of a liberal education; but under the domination of Ferdinand the Catholic and Charles V., when all privileges were bestowed upon hypocrisy and the outward semblance of piety, a marked change might have been traced in the connection which the Religieuses held with the world. Irregularities augmented in proportion as the turbulence incident to wars and the vices of delegated authority threw the country into the anarchy of oligarchs. It was then that the all-powerful, invested with distinctions, and resplendent with the effulgence of courts, were enabled to seduce the pious daughters of the highest lineage. These then ceded the field to the officers of the army; the brilliancy of arms bore the palm from the magnificence and gallantry of the Court. In this way the seductions of love succeeded by corruption took possession of the minds of a crowd of youthful beauty, whose hitherto pure and spotless hearts had been inaccessible to aught but friendship and the sentiments which virtue inspires.

It was then that the authority, not taking its

stand on constituted bases, but upon the privileges and exemptions of the nobility, of the clergy, and the Court of Rome, yielded to circumstances, and, impotent to aid, saw a multitude of its subjects perish before their eyes, victims of the reaction of so many powers, or saw them elude the chief of these—that which emanated from the throne. The Aulic Council passed judgment on the individuals who belonged to the Court and the army; the clerical body had its own tribunal, which appealed to the Court of Rome, and the monastic bodies depended directly from it. The Archbishop of Naples and the Nuncio had their particular prisons, where they incarcerated every male or female who was subject to the Church, and often hid among them those whom they wished to withdraw from the protection of the Sovereign. Every church, convent, feudal palace, enjoyed the privilege of a sanctuary, and had in its pay the most notorious bravos. A correspondence between Naples, Rome, and Sicily, by the means of boats which navigated the Tiber, carried on all the operations of the Government, and managed all intrigues; and perhaps it would be possible to prove that without the intervention of the Roman Curia the memorable Sicilian Vespers would never have taken place. When these dark agencies failed in giving the guilty a loophole of escape, a Papal Bull would, in a hundred cases, interfere to abstract him from the hands of justice,

and declare him enrolled in the body of the clergy. In a hundred instances an inhuman father, eccentric or avaricious, aided by the authority of the Nuncio or the Bishop, could consign to a convent a daughter whose state caused him embarrassment, or a wife whose fidelity he suspected. When the honour of a noble lady was compromised publicly, and when her accomplice was not evident to her parents, she and the man on whom suspicion fell were assassinated and buried, imprisoned secretly, or, infine, when it was wished to give proof of mildness and moderation, the damsel disappeared from the world and the man went to pronounce his vows in a convent. Perhaps the condition of the female was worse in those days than it is at this day in Turkey. A mere shadow of suspicion, a calumnious accusation, a hallucination begot of jealousy, the false deposition of a rejected lover, sufficed to assemble in all haste a family council, under the same mysterious circumstances in which the Spanish Inquisition was wont to envelop its tribunal, when it would thunder against the accused that sentence which, according to the prejudices of the period, could alone wipe off the often imaginary stain from the family escutcheon in the public eyes. Nor was there aught save blood to wash this blot upon the honour of the name. In force of this barbarous code, the woman, if married, was stabbed or strangled in her bed; if marriageable, she was con-

demned to the civil death of convent seclusion, or taken off by poison. Nor could the whole broad land afford escape to the one who had fallen under the suspicions of the domestic Inquisition. The hand of the assassin, armed with traitorous steel, would have pursued the unfortunate one to Rome, to Florence, to Milan, even to the then freer soil of Venice; would have found the victim in the depths of the most secluded convent, and have transfixed it at the foot of the altar itself. And so imperious was this thirst of arbitrary setting to rights, and so ineradicably incorporated into the prejudices of the age, that more than one Cardinal has been known to place the dagger in the assassin's grasp—more than one Pope has given free scope to the revenge of his nephews.

But let us return to what concerns myself.

What is that special distinction, the characteristic trait which distinguishes the female from the male monastery?

It has remained unmarked by the world up to this moment. I will reveal it. It is Confession.

In the year 1571 an order of the Cardinal Archbishop Carafa imposed on all the convents within his jurisdiction the exclusion of monks from their confessionals, and thenceforth admitting, as confessors, none but the secular priests. This change, the chronicle of Sister Fulvia remarks, "displeased all, as much from those fathers being in exceeding

good repute, as well as that we could not be persuaded that the secular priests should, in so short a notice, make themselves acquainted with that which was suited to the cloister-life."

The result of this separation was that on the subject of confession there was no longer conformity of opinion and sentiment between the monk and nun.

If this sacrament be a simple duty, and easy of performance for the men, it is not so for the women. The business of confession is their daily and nightly solicitude; occupies their whole thoughts, concentrates their feelings, and furnishes an inexhaustible fund to their recreations. In process of time confession becomes for them a *sine qua non* of their existence—an occult science learnt in the silence of their prison, in part through self-experience, in part through mutual teaching—a kind of camorra which has its adepts, its dumb regulations, its chiefs, and its penal code. Imagine any council suppressing the supreme blessing of the confessional in a convent. The nation need not concern itself in striking at the future of monachism by special laws. As far at least as nuns are concerned, convents would dissolve themselves by spontaneous act, in my judgment, and that within a period which might be reckoned in weeks.

Prior to my entrance into the convent (it being

Christmas), my mother had enjoined me to confess to my aunt Lucretia's confessor. He was an old man of rough and surly manner, but at heart a good Christian. Accustomed always to approach the confessional with great reverence, I regarded the confessor, not simply as man, but as a divine minister. He came every Monday to me for this purpose.

I found the confessionals constructed like little rooms, carefully curtained in every direction, and furnished with a stool to sit at one's ease.

I asked why the nuns confessed seated—a proceeding so contrary to general usage. They replied that it was impossible to remain kneeling for two or three consecutive hours, that it was customary to kneel at the moment of absolution only.

"What!" I said, in astonishment; "you require two or three hours to tell the confessor that you neither wished to commit nor have committed sins in two or three days of cloister-life? What will become, at that rate, of the poor worldlings much more subject than you to temptation?"

"We know," they said, "that it is customary with worldlings to make confession of a few minutes' duration; but we not only confess our venial sins (for in the convent mortal sins are never committed), but we wish our confessor, the confidant and faithful trust of our own election, to direct us in our acts and thoughts. It is to him we confide all that concerns

or affects us; he is our only friend—the only channel through which it is permitted us to give vent to our innermost sentiments. Severed from all family ties, we find in him paternal affection, the mother's tenderness, the affections of sister and brother. Whilst separated from the world, we find in the intimacy which binds us so cordially together the personification of a universe, in recompense for our solitude. You yourself, in a little while, especially if you can be induced to give up that old confessor you have got, and select a young one, will pass hours in the confessional."

These words left an unpleasant impression on me, though at the time I did not fully comprehend the intention conveyed in them.

When the father arrived, I made a brief confession of my faults.

He informed me that in the convent it was imperative to take the sacrament almost every day. I begged that I might be dispensed; because I thought I could not do so with sufficient devotion without preceding it by confession.

He was satisfied that I should take it twice a week, as a commencement. I entered the Communion; and my aunt Lucretia's maid rang a bell, to summon the priest with the pyx. He was a man of fifty years of age, stout, red-faced, with a type of countenance as vulgar as it was repulsive.

I approached the aperture to receive the communion, and (as is customary) closed my eyes in the act; when the wafer was placed on my tongue, and I was about to withdraw it, I felt my cheek caressed. I opened my eyes suddenly; the priest had withdrawn his hand. I imagined at the moment it might have been done accidentally, and did not wish to think further of it.

On the next occasion when I was to receive, I had forgotten all about this circumstance, and, as usual, closed my eyes on receiving the particle. This time I felt my chin gently pressed; and, on opening my eyes, I saw the priest, with jocund expression, fixing his look intently on them.

There was no longer any doubt; the caress of the first time, and the pressure of the second, could not be the result of accident.

Woman, as a daughter of Eve, is more curious than the opposite sex. I determined to place myself in such a position as to be able to observe if this libertine acted thus with the nuns. I did so, and satisfied myself that the very old and decrepit alone were exempt from the attention; all the others permitted him to do as he pleased.

"Is this the reverence," I said to myself, "which priests and nuns have for the Holy Eucharist? Do these people quit the world to receive lessons of such morality as this?"

In the mean time the sphere of my isolation became more contracted every day. My persistance in saying that I would not become a nun was a source of irritation to all the sisters. Unanimously they laid the blame on the confessor, who they insisted did not know how to persuade me to embrace the life of the cloister.

"No, he is not suited for you," they repeated; "and the evident proof of his incapacity is the short period he remains in the confessional. He listens and does not speak; without spontaneous activity, he remains in a state of mere passive attention. Has he, for example, explained to you the difference between the life of worldlings, the greater portion of whom plunge headlong into eternal darkness, and that of the religieuses, nearly all of whom are saved?"

The nuns would not rest; an exhortation from this one, a catechizing from the other, all drawing their arguments from the most besotted superstitions, and through the most barbarous vernacular, essayed to exorcise the malignant spirit which inspired me with such aversion for their society.

One of these, whose name was Maddalena, the most fanatical of them, would come every evening into the room of my aunt Lucretia, intent, at all cost, on my conversion. When she saw that the sophistries of her logic were fruitless, she said at last to me,—

"Will you do me a favour?"

"Speak!" I replied.

"I expect my confessor to-morrow; he is a Canon of the Church, and possesses the learning of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the virtues of St. Francis Caracciolo, your ancestor; will you lay before him your reasons for abhorring the monastic state, and hear his answers?"

Knowing that I had no intention of yielding, she continued, "Do you know that God, having placed this opportunity of entering the cloister and separating yourself from the world before you, has given you a proof of his great goodness, and which He refuses to so many? Some day or another He will bring you to a heavy reckoning for thus contemning his immense favour. On the other hand, if you seek counsel of the servants of God" (these servants were the priests and nuns), "and afterwards your opinions remain unchanged, you will have purged your mind of any scruples, and He cannot reproach you for any negligence."

These reasons, entirely new to me, and reiterated each night with increasing insistance and loquacity; the oppressive atmosphere of the convent; my youth, joined to my complete ignorance of priestly and monkish imposture; in fine, the education I had received, which rendered me pliable to superiors and courteous to all, made me give in to her instances.

On the following morning Maddalena, radiant with exultation, conducted me to her learned reverend. The satisfaction and solicitude of this nun much reassured me. "If," I said to myself, "there should be anything equivocal in her relation with the priest, would she make me a participator in her happiness with such frankness?"

"Are you not curious to prove the efficacy of a genuine confession?" she asked me, some moments previous to my introduction.

"Most curious," I rejoined.

My position, in fact, resembled that of one buried alive, who, roused from his trance, moves about the dark catacomb with outstretched hands in vain hope of an issue.

The Canon was a man of forty years of age, possessing a countenance of great expression and mobility of feature. If he was not a Jesuit, no one was more worthy to be one. After many complimentary phrases and salutations, he inquired, in courteous expressions, my name and age, and several similar details. Then crossing one leg over the other, and slowly rubbing his hands together, he said, "I will suppose, Signorina, that it is your intention to take the veil."

"Not so, your Reverence."

"And why?"

"Because the cloister inspires me with unutterable repugnance."

"In due time you will so habituate yourself to this sweet imprisonment as to be unable to tear yourself from it. Did you not then enter of your own free will?"

"No; I was forced by my mother."

"Ah! forced by mamma!" (A short pause, during which he appeared immersed in profound meditation.) "Tell me, Signorina, have you ever been in love?"

"Twice."

"What did you look for on these occasions?"

"To marry the person I loved."

"Have you ever sent or received letters from your lovers?"

"Never" (I remembered the note written by Domenico).

"What termination had these loves?"

"I was forsaken by those I loved."

"And your mother"——

"Irritated with me for keeping my faith with my second lover."

"You see, my daughter," he cried, "the difference which lies between the earthly and the heavenly spouse; those abandoned you whilst you loved them, this one seeks you whilst you care not for him; seeks you faithfully and perseveringly, whilst you persist in rejecting him. The first have made a plaything of your existence, embittered the fresh and pure cup of your youth; the second wishes to heap on you unutterable joys; he opens the doors

of his house to you, and would unite you with his beloved brides; he opens his arms to you, and would make you forget the grief which men have caused you."

He continued for a considerable time in this strain —little edifying to me; at last I broke in.

"Is it true, or not," I said, "that man has been created for mankind? If as you say the family of Christ was this limited community, why then was the Son of God crucified for the salvation of the whole human race? It has been said that to take delight in solitude, in isolation, one must be an angel or a beast. *Quis solitudinem delectatur aut Deus aut fera est.* Now, your Reverence, I am neither divine, nor yet am I of the wild beasts. I love the world, and take delight in the companionship of my fellow-beings. Nor do I believe that you yourself hold human companionship in abhorrence; if such were the case, would you not have become a monk confessor at least, if not an anchorite of the Thebaid."

"To these observations," replied the Canon, rising and seizing his hat, "I will give you an answer at our next meeting. You promise me to return again?"

I was obliged to acquiesce; besides, to say the truth, I was curious to hear the persuasive eloquence of the much-lauded Canon.

Two days later he sent for me to communicate to me that the Holy Symbol had inspired his prayers

that he alone should confess me, and intimated that I should address a letter for that purpose to my old confessor, thanking him for the charity (in the monastic glossary doing a charity means confessing), and announcing to him that I was provided with another confessor.

I was grieved at his exacting this, and showed great disinclination to comply with it; but the Canon, declaring that the virtue most dear to God was that of obedience to the Cross, forbade me to leave the room until I had promised to indite this letter as soon as I returned to my room. The letter was written, not without much grief on my part.

Now, if the change of confessor vexed me, it was the occasion of still more heartache to Sister Maddalena, who, though she was most anxious to display the portentous eloquence of her confessor, was, on the other hand, far from imagining that the act of my conversion would have required a second conference. I met her in the afternoon; on seeing me she became perfectly livid, and, muttering I know not what, uncourteously turned on her heel and hurried away.

"Maddalena is very singular!" said one of the nuns to me. "She would insist on your seeing her confessor whether you wished or not, and now she is wild with jealousy."

"Jealousy!" I cried, unable to restrain my laughter; "jealousy of whom?"

"The Canon, it seems, manifests less affection for her than for you; moreover, you have dismissed your old confessor to become his penitent."

I was stupified. As I could not recall the letter I had written to the old priest, I despatched one immediately to the Canon, the purport of which was that as I did not wish to create enemies for myself in the convent, I would dispense with his services and provide myself with another confessor.

After the lapse of an hour I heard the portress's bell repeat six strokes, the number indicating my summons.

I found the Canon in the parlour.

"You have sent me my dismissal," he cried, laughing.

"Yes!" I replied. "I have no wish to be annoyed for these few remaining days which I must pass here; and as I am not uncivil to any one, so I do not choose to give any one the right to treat me with impertinence."

"The fact is," rejoined he, still laughing, "I can take no notice of your dismissal; but, on the contrary, in order to tranquillize you, I will announce to Maddalena this very day that I do not confess her any longer; in this way she need have no motive for inquiring whether I feel a liking for you or not. Mine be the sacred duty to bring to the fold the lamb

which has strayed and which God has consigned to my care. I am not permitted to abandon you."

"I cannot understand," I replied, with some seriousness, "how jealousy can insinuate itself into the sacrament of confession, nor is it for me to inquire the cause of such unqualifiable association. I can only tell you, if you leave Maddalena you bring on me a more determined persecution. Grant me this favour; retain her and free me. I declare to you that I will not enter the confessional whilst you are there."

"In that case," he rejoined, laying aside his merriment, "I must employ another expedient."

He then left me, in doubt as to what he intended to do.

I had pre-determined that in this I would not yield a step; for that reason I had requested my aunt, the Abbess, to seek me another confessor, and under the condition that he was to be both an old man and without a second penitent within the convent.

My aunt promised this. She was much grieved to see me placed in this embarrassing position, and without any fault of my own.

It was about three o'clock when I heard a great uproar in the corridor. I went to the window and saw Maddalena crying and holding a folded paper in

her hand, surrounded also by a circle of excited nuns and lay sisters, all seemingly speaking at once.

An affair of confession is for nuns what an affair of State is for a ministry—often a *casus belli.*

I comprehended the whole matter, and groaned over the hour in which they had first brought me into that holy Pandemonium.

The uproar went on increasing; the whole sisterhood was out. Among the confused cries of revolt, there was but one single word distinguishable—the word "Canon!"

I drew back from the window in such a manner as to see without being seen.

In the mean time the old Abbess had come up to the scene of confusion, leaning upon one of the pupils, and was endeavouring to appease Maddalena, promising that her niece should no longer confess to the Canon—that she herself would find a substitute for me.

"Will you give me your word of it?" cried Maddalena, like one possessed; whilst the seventy mouths which gaped around were hushed in expectancy.

"I pledge myself to it," rejoined the Abbess.

"That is right!—that is right!" exclaimed the nuns in chorus. "It would have been intolerable to have seen him in the confessional with another." Congratulating Maddalena on the recovery of her

rights, they cried, "Now be happy again; you have had justice done you."

From that singular scene, which can never be effaced from my memory, I began to feel convinced that the solicitude of penitents for their confessors, and of the confessor for his penitent, had its existence in a certain sentiment not too conformable to the evangelical precept, "Love thy neighbour as thyself."

But the scene was destined not to terminate there. It was written that the important subject of my confession was to find its solution with the eminent authorities of the Holy Mother Church.

On the following morning I was again summoned to the parlour: this time it was Monsignore the Vicar. What could he want with me?

He wanted to tell me that the Canon had had an interview with him—had related the matter between Maddalena and myself to him, and that he, in the quality of head of the Metropolitan, had decided that I, and not Maddalena, should remain the penitent of the Canon.

It only required the sanction of the Pope to complete the comedy.

Neither my protests nor my tears of vexation availed. My aunt reproved me, saying that the Vicar I must obey without contradiction.

I returned to my room, and wrote a long letter to my mother, narrating everything, and reminding her that the second month of my imprisonment was about to expire, and that I did not wish to remain longer in the convent.

It would be too tedious to recount what I endured from this jealousy; my persecutions terminated only when Maddalena had found another confessor, and had forgotten the first.

The frenetical infatuation which nuns entertain for priests and monks passes all credibility. The liberty which they enjoy of seeing and writing to the object of their adoration makes the cloister a welcome abode to them. They are unhappy only when in the case of illness—or before taking the veil, if they should pass some months with their families—as neither father nor mother nor brother would be likely to permit a young girl to pass several hours of the day alone with a priest or monk, and to write incessantly to him. This is a liberty which they enjoy in the convent only.

Many are the hours which the cloister Heloise spends in the confessional in sweet communion with her frocked Abelard. 'Tis only pity that they do not understand a syllable of Latin!

Some, whose confessor is old, have superadded a spiritual director, with whom they pass several hours in the parlour. When not satisfied with this,

they find means in alleging illness, feigned or real, to have an interview *tête-a-tête* with them in their own rooms. There are nuns who without the intervention of the confessor dare not even make out the list of their washing.

One nun received hers three times a day. In the forenoon he brought her the components of her dinner; later he would come to say mass in the church, when she served him with coffee and biscuits; and again in the afternoon, at which visit he remained until a late hour, in order that he might (so she said) give her an account of what he had laid out for her in the morning. Not satisfied with this, they would exchange notes twice in the intervals of these visits.

Another nun had conceived an affection for a priest from the period at which he had served in the church as acolyte. Arrived at the priesthood, he was made sacristan; but, accused by his fellow priests of his intimacy with the nun, he was prohibited by his superiors from even passing the street where the nunnery stood. For sixteen years she remained constant to him, during which period they corresponded every day, sent each other costly presents, and contrived to see each other from time to time clandestinely in the parlour. Finally, the Superior being changed, the nun, though now arrived at a mature age, procured him as her confessor. For this favour she made many presents to images, offered up candles

and flowers, gave sweetmeats to all the sisterhood, and, as on the occasion of a marriage, received congratulations, not even refusing the ovation of a little complimentary madrigal. Finally, she had constructed, at her own expense, a special confessional, so that she might command it for her spiritual exercises at any hour of the day.

A personage of high position sought an interview of the Abbess one morning, for the purpose of putting into her hands a letter which he himself had found in the street. That epistle, addressed by one of the Spouses of Christ to her priest, had been dropped by the servant. The very material language used in it had shocked the conscience of the gentleman—a language which the commonest courtezan would have shrunk from expressing herself in.

The confessors of the "Community" are chosen triennially by the Superiors for the service of those nuns and lay sisters who may not have any particular one, as being arrived at an age unsuited to amorous intrigues. Now, one of these, prior to his nomination, had a young penitent in the convent. Every time he came to visit a dying sister, and for that purpose passed the night in the convent, the nun would climb over the balustrade which separated hers from the priest's room, and thus betook herself to the master and director of her soul.

Another, during the delirium of a typhus fever

from which she was suffering, never ceased from imitating the action of sending kisses to the confessor as he sat at her bed-side. He, confounded with shame at this in the presence of others, held up towards the sick woman a crucifix, and, in a commiserating tone, exclaimed, "Poor thing! she is kissing her spouse."

A young pupil, as pure in life as she was beautiful in person and noble in descent, told me, under a promise of secrecy, that she had received from her confessor in the confessional a most interesting book, as she called it, because it related to the monastic state. I expressed a desire to see it, which she, taking the precaution first to secure her room door, willingly acceded to. It was the 'Nun' of Diderot, a book, as many know, full of the most revolting improprieties, and of all books the most pernicious to the mind of the innocent. Having learned from the girl of what the work treated, I begged of her to discontinue its perusal, and restore forthwith to its owner this ill-favoured loan. What was my surprise, however, on hearing this young creature confess that this style of reading was by no means new to her; that, through the favour of her confessor, she had already got through more than once another work of the most immoral tendency—the 'Chronicle of the Monastery of St. Arcangelo a Bajano'—a book prohibited by the Bourbon police!

I myself received a letter from a monk, in which he announced impertinently to me that he had no sooner beheld me than he had entertained the sweet hope to become my confessor; and an exquisite of the first water, a fop of scents and euphuism, could not have employed a phraseology of more melodramatic style to ask whether he was to hope or despair.

A priest, the most insupportable of the class, from his obstinate assiduity, sought to make me love him at all cost. There was not an image which profane poesy could lend him, nor a sophism he could borrow from rhetoric, nor wily interpretation he could give to the Word of God, which he did not employ in the endeavour to convert me to his wishes. I would give a succinct specimen of his logic.

"My fair daughter!" he said to me one day, "do you know what God really is?"

"He is the Creator of the universe," I answered dryly.

"No, no, no, no! that is not enough," replied he, laughing at my simplicity. "God is love—but abstract love, which receives its incarnation in the sympathy of two hearts which idolize each other. You cannot, nor should you, love God, in the abstract existence alone. You should love him likewise in his incarnation—or in the exclusive love of a man who adores you—*quod Deus est amor .... nec colitur nisi amando.*"

"Then, according to that," I interposed, "a woman who adores her lover is adoring the Deity himself?"

"Assuredly!" reiterated the padre over and over again, taking courage from my conclusion, and chuckling at the success of his catechism.

"In that case," I rejoined quickly, "I prefer for a lover a worldling, rather than a priest."

"May God keep you, my daughter! may God deliver you from such a snare!" cried my interlocutor, with an expression of horror. "Love a worldling, one of the profane, the impious, the unbelieving! Why! you would go unconditionally to hell! The love of a priest is a sacred love; that of the profane is but a reproach and a shame. The trust you should repose in the priest is the same as that which you bestow on the Holy Church; that of the worldling is lying and false, like all worldly vanities. The priest purifies his affections daily by his communion with the Holy Substance; the man of the world befouls his love (if indeed he feels love) daily and nightly in the miry gutter of the highway."

"But my heart, as well as my conscience, is repugnant to the priest."

"Well, if you will not love me because I am your confessor, I can take away your scruples. We will premise all our affectionate demonstrations with the name of Jesus Christ: in this way our love will be

an offering most acceptable to the Lord, and will ascend a grateful odour up to Heaven, as the smoke of incense in the sanctuary. Say to me, for example, 'I love you in Jesus Christ; this night I dreamt of you in Jesus Christ;' thus you will have your conscience tranquillized, since in so doing you sanctify any transport whatever."

Several circumstances, only hurriedly alluded to here, obliged me to be frequently in the society of this priest, whose name I suppress.

Having inquired of a monk, respectable both from his age and the morality of his life, what was meant by this prefixing the name of Christ to amorous apostrophes,—

"A horrible sect," he replied, "and unfortunately too widely spread, abusing the name of Christ, give thus a licence to the most nefarious wickedness."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BELL.

On the 21st of March, the day dedicated to St. Benedict, I assumed the dress of a pupil.

The nuns were in no haste to make me put on this dress sooner, as I was in mourning for my father. The ceremony was most simple. Depositing the tunic on a tray, they sent it to the church, to be placed upon the altar of St. Benedict.

The Canon above cited said mass, blessed the garment, and I put it on. It was made of a common woollen stuff, with light sleeves down to the wrist, and having a little scapulary attached to it; a white cotton apron, and handkerchief of the same material round the neck, completed the dress.

The hair was drawn plainly over the ears, and fastened with a comb: this mode of wearing it, and the heavy shoes, were the most irksome things in the costume.

The Canon ascended to the parlour after the mass, to see me in this new costume, and to make me his compliments.

The persuasions of the confessor had no effect in causing me to renounce the wish of getting out. Nor did his assiduity in visiting me three or four times a week inspire me with more attachment to the convent life.

I wrote incessantly to my mother, to remind her of her promise. In March she wrote me word that one of her children was ill; in April she said, that as my aunt Lucretia had just died, it would be unseemly to leave the other aunt Abbess so soon; in May she neglected to write; and finally, in June I fell ill. A slow fever had begun to waste me.

General Saluzzi, Josephine, and one of my elder sisters, who was at that time in Naples, in some resentment at my mother's negligence, wrote to her. She wrote back, that she herself could not come to fetch me, but that an intimate friend of hers, a lady of Messina, who was at that time in Naples, and about to return home, would take charge of me, and that she would receive me at Messina.

I gave myself up to unbounded joy on the receipt of this. I should return to Reggio. I should be restored to liberty. I should see Domenico again. I called to memory the sigh of Alighieri:

"Liberta vo cercando ch 'e si cara
Come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta."

My confessor wished to demonstrate to me that this feeling of satisfaction was not less than sinful; the nuns pronounced me ungrateful to God, to themselves, and to San Benedetto; and for the whole month during which the lady was still detained in Naples, they continued to assail me with one absurd story after another of persons who had been eternally lost because they would not listen to the voice of God, who called them to the Cloister; such as, for example, that of the "Bambino" of wood, which had remained with the foot raised, in the very act in which it had administered a parting kick to M. C., a girl who had once left the convent; how the statue of St. Benedict had given certain knocks on the pavement of his niche; of apparitions of souls in purgatory; of witches and vampires, demons and demoniacs,—things equally absurd as new to me. Tormented daily by similar twaddle, more suited to the "good old times" of the crusades than our own, and not less adapted to demoralise the mind than they were to debase the conscience and heart, I prayed to Heaven to preserve me my poor reason.

The day of my deliverance approached.

It had been arranged by my mother that, on my quitting the convent, I should go to my sister's house, there to await the lady who was to escort me.

The night which preceded this day of liberty had been too full of emotion for me to sleep, and I passed

the first hours of it in wakefulness. Then came on a sleep disturbed by the fantastical discourse of the priests and nuns—by dreams of spectres, phantoms, horrible demons, saints, relics, &c.

I was thus betwixt sleep and waking when I fancied I head the tinkle of a small bell close to my head. I awoke completely—opened my eyes and listened—profound silence was around me.

This silence, and the state of agitation caused by my dreams, banished sleep altogether.

As soon as daybreak appeared, I got up and dressed myself; shortly after which one of the sisters entered my room. Describing to her the state of discomfort I had passed the night in, I related also the singular hallucination of the bell.

With an exclamation of extatic rapture, and hastily crossing herself, she bounded out into the corridor, yelling at the extent of her voice, "A miracle! a miracle!"

"Heyday! what miracle? who has worked any miracle?" I exclaimed, as I followed her precipitate and unaccountable action.

"Can you ask? Why, St. Benedict's bell!—he has called you!"

In five minutes afterwards the whole convent was topsy-turvy. The nuns, the pupils, the lay sisters, could talk of nothing else. They had even begun to discuss the propriety of a mass to perpetuate the memory of this miracle in the annals of the convent.

Notwithstanding the miraculous bell, I held my ground. When the time of my departure arrived, I embraced my old aunt, as I shed tears at this separation from her, and in a state of perfect happiness passed over the convent threshold. My first visit was to Josephine, whose illness had prevented me seeing her for a long time. I then proceeded to the house of my other sister, where I was to remain for ten days. It was written, however, that my liberty was to be but of short duration. A few days had passed when two letters from Reggio were consigned to me. They were from my two sisters who were married there, and who most urgently counselled me to return again to the convent. The reasons they alleged for such advice were most painful. My mother was about to be married again. Domenico, having forgotten me, and insensible to my misfortunes, had attached himself to another lady; and I ran the risk of passing from a convent of the capital into a provincial one.

These ill-omened tidings completely overthrew me. The whole and heavy weight of my orphaned condition was discharged at once on me.

After long reflection upon the critical position this news left me in, I came to the resolution, not without considerable reluctance and shame at being a burthen to others, to ask my brother-in-law to allow me to remain in his house until God gave me some other means of life.

He generously gave me a home.

When the lady who was to fetch me came, I informed her of my decision, and that I no longer desired to leave. She returned alone.

In another week a letter came from my mother. In terms of indignation and anger she protested she would no longer stand my disobedience. She had gone to Messina to receive me, and, not finding me, nothing could exceed her wrath. This was not enough.

My brother-in-law in two days after this received a summons from the Minister of Police, who intimated to him that he must send me to my mother, in obedience to her command.

"My dear sister-in-law," said this worthy man, "I have offered you the hospitality of my house, and would with pleasure still continue to do so, if in so doing I were not giving offence to your mother; but now, from the turn which matters are taking, I must frankly tell you I do not wish to offend my mother-in-law."

It was thus plainly intimated to me that I must leave.

What was I to do? Where was I to go?—to whom was I to apply?

I found myself in a terrible dilemma—a prison on my right, another on my left—on every side desertion and despair.

"My God!" was my internal cry, whilst I could not restrain my tears, "what is to become of me?—without resources, without all support—powerless. If a cruel destiny turns everything against me, is there not at least some humane law which will befriend me?"

There was a ring at the door. It was an old friend of the family, bowed under the weight of seventy years. When he heard what had taken place, this good old man exhorted me to return to the convent, until, as he said, the storm had blown over—that later an attempt would be made to bring about a reconciliation with my mother. My sister and my brother-in-law, and other friends of the family, joined likewise in this opinion; nor, to say the truth, could I see, myself, any other issue to escape from despair: I had no other resource.

Not knowing therefore to what more efficacious saint to turn, as the saying is, I was taken back to the convent in the afternoon. Having called my aunt aside, I told her it was my wish to return there again for a few more months, to which she replied that it was necessary to consult the disposition of the sisters upon that resolution. Shortly after a convocation was held in the parlour, and, having heard my request from the mouth of the abbess, they replied that they would willingly receive me back into the establishment, if I would declare at that mo-

ment, I re-entered not provisionally, but to take the veil—otherwise, they would be constrained to refuse. What horrible alternative!

My sister, seeing my perplexity and distress, and my hesitation in replying, prompted me in an undertone to say yes, for form sake, as, having once given me admittance, they could not turn me out.

I was persuaded. I believed I could do this with impunity, and I answered in hardly audible words, that I returned to become a nun.

"Say it aloud!" repeated the abbess; "are you finally decided on taking the vows?"

My heart beat violently; my brain was whirling round, and I thought I should have swooned. I begged for a seat, and wiped the cold perspiration which stood on my forehead, and with the voice of one expiring, I answered—

"Yes!"

The die was thrown!—Fatal "Yes!"

The affirmative was hardly pronounced, when a chorus of acclamations and festive cries arose. The sisters in common accord broke out in asseverations that my conversion was effected by the bell of St. Benedict, which I myself had acknowledged to have heard on the night previous to my leaving the convent, and a bevy of lay sisters was forthwith despatched to the belfry to ring a festive peal.

The neighbours, hearing the bells ring at an

unusual hour, sent to inquire what had occurred. The nuns sent answer that the niece of the abbess had, through inspiration from above, declared she would become a nun.

Confused, overwhelmed by these unexpected combinations, my senses began to wander. I trembled like an autumn leaf.

It was fixed that I was to be shut up on the day following. I returned to my sister's house in a state of the most profound dejection. She herself was much distressed at the turn which (without her intending it) matters had taken.

The ill-omened sound of the bell echoed in my ears all that night; a thousand times I repented me of having uttered that fatal Yes, and accused myself of weakness.

Woe to those dragged along by inexorable fate! On the following day I presented myself at the convent, at the door of which many of my friends were stationed to receive me.

I was hailed with a fresh festive peal, and an explosion of "mortalette," * a ceremony which was sure to collect an immense crowd. Nothing was spoken of during that day but the miraculous bell and my vows. The Canon went about radiant with joy; the

* Short, thick tubes of iron, each containing a strong charge of powder, and exploded in file on Neapolitan church festivities.—*Translator's Note.*

sisters all in a state of exultation—a coming and going without cessation of priests and confessors in the church. The Rector and Cardinal Caracciolo himself came to compliment me on my decision; and in the afternoon my aunt gave a sumptuous entertainment of ices and cakes to the Community. In fine, to secure me in the meshes in which I had become entangled, so as to render it impossible for me to free myself, the priests and sisters trumpeted the miracle of St. Benedict and the act of my conversion with all possible publicity.

To relieve the solitary sufferings which were awaiting me, I had provided myself with some volumes, which I hid at the bottom of my trunk. Among these was a Bible, the 'Confessions' of St. Augustine, and the 'Manual' of Epictetus. I had also searched for the 'Consolations' of Boetius, but could not succeed in finding it. But a friendly hand put me in possession of one especially adapted to my situation—that of Zimmermann on Solitude. I promised myself a new fountain of comfort, and thought the time long until I should be able to read it.

After the entertainment of ices was over, and the nuns had retired, bidding good night to my aunt, I hastened to draw from my trunk the longed-for volume. With what palpitating avidity I devoured the first pages by the light of the lamp! The eloquence, the animated and charming style, the swee-

melancholy, the appeal to the sentiments and passions by which the author studies to instil the love of solitude into the reader, elevated me from the beginning to an unknown region of poesy, and I thanked Providence for having given me the companionship of a master capable of poetizing the bitterness of exile, of making me more contented with my chains, and of tempering my rebellious heart to the uniformity of inactivity, to the long monotony of quiet.

But soon a sad thought assailed me. "Was this philosopher" (I asked myself), "who with such a bounteous hand scatters the flowers of eloquence over the charms of solitude—was he in fact a prisoner like myself? Had he been constrained like me by superior and invincible force to make the sacrifice of his own will? He who with such power descants on the advantages of retirement—does he know how full of death is solitude,—how empty of all affections, of bonds, of memories, of aspirations? Solitude stripped of every germ of love—shackled with a thousand usages one more servile than another—sentenced to a perpetual and ignoble sterility?"

I fell deeper than ever into despondency. A hand of iron was on my throat; I felt as if I should suffocate.

The neighbouring clock had already struck one; I closed the book, and, extinguishing the light, I

opened the window to breathe more freely. The sky was covered with heavy clouds moving about according to the impulse of the wind. On the edge of the horizon a solitary star gave out a faint ray, and the moon, likewise dimmed with haze, showed with uncertain light on the convent walls. Some drops of rain which now and then pattered on the pavement alone interrupted the general silence.

It occurred to me to write to my mother; to pen a letter of tears. I relit the lamp, and made a rapid draft of it; but deeming its style too agitated, I tore it up.

"Would it not be better," was my reflection, "to confide my sorrow and my straits to my aunt? But at this hour she must be asleep. I will waken her."

To reach her room it was necessary to traverse a gloomy corridor. I knocked at the door—there was no answer; the knock was repeated. The servant recognising my voice opened the door, bewildered at such a visit.

The sight of me at that hour and in such violent emotion filled the Abbess with astonishment. Having requested that the lay sister should retire, "Dear aunt," I said, hardly able to master the emotion which assailed me, "it grieves me sorely to bring this trouble upon you; but time presses, and my fate rushes along with it. I do not wish to let myself be surprised by events which lie beyond duty."

I then informed her with much exactness of that chain of circumstances which had induced me to return to the convent, in all which I had stipulated for ultimate freedom; and concluded with declaring that I felt not the slightest vocation for the monastic life —nay, the most insuperable repugnance.

The poor old woman broke into tears, and, hiding her face with her hands, exclaimed—

"Alas! alas! what a disgrace is this for my old age, for my last abbesship! What will the sisters say? What will the cardinal say, and the vicar—the whole world? They will call you insane, and myself still more so, for having induced you to re-enter. And St. Benedict's bell too, which rang, and the public papers which will speak of it! What a scandal it will be; what a handle for the freethinkers in the city!"

The poor old creature wept bitterly at these reflections. Her perturbation, her great age, and her extreme resemblance to my beloved father, to whom I had never given cause for a moment's displeasure, pained me sorely, and brought me to the resolution of sacrificing myself.

Seeing that she would give herself no pause or peace, but kept repeating in a lamenting tone, "Oh what terrible misfortune! what shame for me!" I took one of her hands within mine, and, giving free vent to my grief, "Dear aunt!" I exclaimed, "be

comforted and lie down again; I will no longer rebel against my fate."

She raised her head and looked fixedly at me. I continued, "Yes! I will become a nun; it will cost me my life; there will be one unfortunate the less; but assuredly I will not embitter the last days of my father's sister."

I could proceed no further, sobs choked my utterance. We remained both embraced without uttering a word. At last she resumed the conversation, and placing a sacred relic she wore round her neck upon my head, "May the blessing of the Holy Mother be upon you, my daughter!" she said; "God and our sainted patriarch will support you in this sacrifice. I will pray night and morning that this vocation which you have not may be granted you, and my prayers will be heard." She exacted from me the promise that the incidents of that nightly conference should not be repeated to a living soul, and this I promised.

The introduction of newspapers into the convent is forbidden. Nevertheless the Canon, taking me aside on the following morning, put before me two papers still damp from the press, in which the public had the following announcement of my decision. One of them wrote—

"We hasten to communicate a fact which will give the devout of all classes great pleasure. Henrietta,

one of the daughters of the late and much regretted Marshal Caracciolo, of the princes of Forino, a young lady of rare piety, has decided on repudiating the vanities of the world for the purpose of taking the veil in the convent of San Gregorio Armeno."

The other *Diario*, a well-known organ of the priestly clique, bore the following:—

"The bell of St. Benedict has again rung! and on this occasion to mark the acquisition to the angelic Benedictine order of another Caracciolo, of tender years; a descendant in a direct line from St. Francesco of the same name. This young lady, who had manifested the utmost reluctance to embrace the monastic life, has now, after a summons during sleep from the miraculous bell, formally expressed her intention to take the veil. Ye impious, and unbelievers, *favete linguis animisque!*"

On one night, about a month after I had returned, and during a sleepless night, I again heard the same bell which had wakened me on the eve of my quitting the convent.

I then became aware that the room adjoining that of my aunt, and separated from it by a thin wall, was occupied by a blind nun, who during the hours of the night was in the habit of making a repeater strike when she wished to know the hour. The state of mental agitation I was in on that and the former night, increased by the tales of superstitious horrors

of the nuns, caused me to mistake the sound of the repeater for a bell.

In the mean time my mother remained silent. I addressed a letter to her, as did also my aunt, to announce the resolution I had made. She answered that she would not permit me to observe this, and for many months opposed the most obstinate resistance. It was her intention, she said, to marry me to a person of her own selection, and she would only permit me to remain in the convent until such an opportunity presented itself.

The commands, however, could not be put into effect immediately. In the month of August, 1840, I had not yet reached the required age to assume the veil. I completed my twentieth year in 1841 only. I therefore had to wait until the month of October of this latter year, or for a period of twenty months from my entrance into the cloister.

This interval was dedicated by the sisterhood to the preparation, at my expense, of the confectionery for the festive occasion; and during this period also my aunt, who for ten consecutive years had filled the office of abbess, was replaced by another Caracciolo—a woman of rather severe and imperious character. Her rigour, in contrast to the exceeding mildness of my aunt's sway, caused general dissatisfaction.

It was permitted me, in compliment to my mother, that I should pass forty days, prior to my taking the

vows, with her. I was, however, obliged to pay down before I got out 700 ducats for the expenses of the ceremony; and here I take the opportunity of recording that the excellent General Saluzzi kept his promise to me, making me a gift of 1000 ducats.

In the mean time my mother, who had returned from Calabria, was residing in Josephine's house with my two younger sisters. She, as well as my other relatives, seeing my resignation under an evil which seemed to me without remedy, thought my vocation real; for, as I was to quit the world for ever, and to avoid further heartburnings, I avoided going into any society, declined theatres, concerts, promenades, &c.

More than once I was on the point of opening my heart to the General, who was like a second father to me, and asking his aid; but my pledged word sealed my lips. He had likewise disbursed the money, of which the greater part was already expended. If I then wished to break the solemn pledge I had given to my aunt and the nuns, could I retract without cutting a sorry figure before my benefactor?

There was absolutely no alternative for me. I had to close my eyes and abandon myself to my destiny.

The day came! A crowd of relations and friends filled the saloons of my brother-in-law from an early hour—the gentlemen in animated and gay discussion —the ladies in merry gossip—the youngest at the

piano—I was the only one with the bitterness of wormwood in my mouth.

At ten o'clock I was summoned for the preparation. I was garlanded with begemmed flowers like a bride. They put on me a costly dress of white lace, and attached a veil of the same colour to my head descending to the feet. Four ladies aided in the toilette, and two others were to accompany me—the Duchess of Carigliano and the Princess of Castagnetto.

Conformable to the custom, these ladies commenced by taking me to different convents in order to exhibit me to the respective nuns. I followed like an automaton, mute and abstracted — and I started into consciousness only when, seated in the porteria of the convent of San Patrizia by the side of my other Benedictine aunt, I saw two acolytes enter hurriedly dressed for mass, and who cried—

"Ladies! O hasten to San Gregorio Armeno; the service is ended; they are waiting only for the nun."

A dagger plunged into my heart could not have given me a greater shock than I felt at this summons. I trembled in all my limbs, and my face became like that of the dead.

The Duchess of Carigliano was the first to rise.

I pressed my hand upon my heart. I rose with difficulty, and kissed my old aunt, who weeping said to me,—

"This is our last kiss! Farewell, my daughter: we shall meet in heaven."

The Princess, who had approached me, examined my countenance narrowly.

"Stop, Duchess!" she said to La Carigliano; "do you not see that our young nun is going to faint?"

In fact, supporting myself by the back of the chair, I was tottering and on the point of falling. A glass of water revived me, and I stood up.

"I will wager," said the Princess, on the road, "that you are not going to take the veil with all your will."

"On the contrary," I replied, suppressing a traiterous sigh, "I am most willing."

In the mean time the carriage advanced and entered the Quartiere San Lorenzo. As we approached the Citta dolente—that abode of woe—I put my head out of the window, and with a kind of desperate curiosity eyed the window-screens, the lattices, the iron grating, and other defences of the convent. At the sight of the huge sepulchre which stood ready to engulf me, I do not know why, urged by irresistible impulse, I did not precipitate myself into the middle of the street—the imperious restraint of *amour-propre* alone withheld me. The nearer I approached to S. Gregorio Armeno, the louder became the sound of the bells—every stroke was a deathstroke to me. At the corner of the street, the confused tongues of

the multitude which had collected from every part, the firing of mortaletti, the acclamations of women out on the balconies, and the band of the Swiss regiment, put the crowning point to the state of stupefaction I was in—I have experienced what must be the last sensations of the condemned to death.

At the principal door I was received by a procession of priests with the cross elevated. Two other ladies, the Princess Montemiletto and the Marchioness Messanella, placed themselves by my side. The priest who carried the cross walked in front, the others formed two wings.

The church was decorated with much elegance and profusely illuminated—divided in the centre by a railing painted red and white, on the right side of which were stationed the ladies who had been invited by my mother; on the left stood the gentlemen, who were received by my cousin the Prince of Forino.

Of that numerous assembly, and highly decorated church and its ocean of light, I was conscious of nothing but a formless and confused mass. Arrived midway in the church, I was desired to kneel—a silver crucifix and a lighted taper were placed in my hands—the former I was directed to hold against my bosom with my left hand, the latter I was to carry in my right.

I reached the high altar. The Vicar performed the service, the Cardinal (who was seated at the side)

being somewhat indisposed. The ladies and myself remained for a few moments on our knees in front of the altar. I was then conducted to the Vicar and directed to kneel.

A priest in a superbly embroidered dress presented a small silver basin with a pair of scissors—with this he cut off a single tress of hair.

I arose, and accompanied by the same procession, and preceded by the band, left the church.

The short distance which lay between this and the convent-lodge was accomplished by the whole cortège on foot, and in the midst of a crowd of the populace.

When I was once more within its walls I broke into one of those floods of tears which it is not within human power to control. The nuns were most anxious to close the doors, crying—

"For God's sake don't cry, or the seculars will not think that you are going to take the veil of your own free will—hush! for pity's sake, hush!"

I went down to the Communion—the Vicar, the priests, and all those who were invited, formed a crowd at the grating. When there, I was stripped by the nuns of my gay attire, of my veil, of my wreath, gloves, even my stockings. Clad in black serge, with my hair gathered closely up, and eyes swollen with weeping, I presented myself at the door of the Communion.

The Vicar blessed the scapulary, and having handed

it to me, I put it on; I then knelt before the Abbess —they had stripped me of my secular dress; they were now to cut my hair off. The nuns plaited my long hair in a single tress, and the Abbess took the large scissors, and with firm hand, prepared to cut. A clear, strong voice at that moment sounded through the crowd, "It is barbarous! don't cut that girl's hair!"

All turned round — "Some madman!" it was whispered. It was an Englishman. The priests commanded silence, and the nuns, who had frequently seen Protestants as spectators of their ceremonies, cried to the Superior, as she stood grasping the scissors, "It is a heretic! cut!"

The hair fell, and I had taken the veil.

CHAPTER X.

THE PROFESSION.

THE year of my noviciate was a year of entire calm for me, if I should not rather call it of moral depression. The past was dead for me; the future a blank; my reminiscences a dream; to hope a crime.

Torn for ever from friends, separated from relatives, whom it was permitted me to see but once a month, a stranger for many reasons to the very companions of my prison, I found myself, if not contented, at least tranquil. Concentrated exclusively within itself, my mind created a second monastery within the monastery itself that I was confined in; and I should have been calmer still within the compass of that deeply-embosomed abode, where I passed such solitary existence, with my few books and meditations, if the visits of relatives had not every time brought back the memory of my lost liberty,—if the nuns, with

their trivial gossip and vulgar jealousies, had not rendered my confinement irksome.

I passed many hours of the day in the choir. It was my office to summon the others thereto by ringing a bell; the rest of the time I remained shut up in my room, or in a little room set apart for novices, in the company of the mistress appointed over these, who in silence and patiently used to hear me read.

By good fortune for me this was an amiable woman of about sixty-four years of age, and she became much attached to me. Her name was Marianna; but I was in the habit of calling her aunt, after the usage of the younger towards the elders.

I know not whether her years may have rendered her insensible to the confessors, or whether she had ever entertained any affectionate regard for them; but she did not approve of the reprehensible conduct of the nuns with regard to them. Her way of thinking, similar to my own, her affection for me, which far exceeded that of my real aunt, were reasons which attached me to her with bonds of almost filial affection.

It was the custom in that convent on solemn occasions, and also on the birthdays of mistress or novice, for the first to make a present to the latter of some object. As she was very rich, and I with very restricted means, receiving no allowance whatever (as I had paid away my entire dower on professing), she

would always make me this present in money, using the utmost delicacy and courtesy in the act.

She could not bear that a word, direct or indirect, should be said to my disadvantage.

One day, the Abbess having summoned the sisters together for the purpose of delivering an admonition on the subject of the flagrant irregularities of the sisterhood, in concluding her discourse said, turning to the younger amongst them,—

"You have been the ruin of the sisterhood. We, the elders, knew nothing of party factions, schisms, of hatreds, jealousies, or envyings; it is you last-comers, abounding in nothing but selfishness and arrogance, who have introduced every dissension into the convent."

My mistress then spoke:

"You must except from this number my novice. She found the convent in this condition; would to heaven that the others were as obedient and as observant of its rules as she!"

"Alas! the mistress's partiality had no other effect than that of creating enemies for me. The one who manifested the most determined hostility to me was Paolina, who had placed herself at the head of a troop of pupils for this end; she hating me, through I know not what monastic craving for something to hate; the others, because I, as novice, had passed a step beyond them as pupils. In the eighth month of my

noviciate my kind mistress and companion fell seriously ill. It was destined that my tranquillity was to be but of short duration.

I had from the first observed a marked delicacy in her; but I as well as the others was ignorant of the malady which afflicted this nun. The burning fever which brought her to her bed became complicated with more sinister symptoms. From the first day the disease declared itself mortal; but the physicians could not define it. It had the character of inflammation; the principal organs of the body were quite exempt from it.

She soon lost her speech: but would sign to me when she wished my aid.

As I stood by her bedside she pointed to her breast with a heartrending groan, as if she wanted a succour which I did not understand.

More than once I wanted to loosen the band which attached the chemise round the throat; but one of her servants, who kept a perpetual guard at her pillow, put forward her hand to prevent me, saying,

"It is wide enough!"

On another occasion, when, in horrible torture, she tried to tear the chemise from her breast, I thought I perceived a bandage.

"What bandage is that?" I asked.

"She is always in the habit of wearing it," replied the servant, reddening.

"But it is preventing her breathing freely; let me loosen it."

"No," replied the woman, rudely pushing aside my hand; "mind your own concerns."

I looked attentively at her, and could see that she had some concealed motive for acting thus; the more so, as the breast of the dying woman exhaled a most fetid odour.

As I was not in the habit of temporizing where feelings of humanity were concerned, I went in search of the Infermiera, whom I told to inform the doctor that he should order the bandage to be removed. This was done, notwithstanding the violent opposition of the maid, and the furious looks she darted at me.

A frightful cancer had eaten away the half of her breast.

Doctor Lucarelli, who arrived later to visit her, when informed of the fact, animadverted in these words on this proceeding:—

"This servant," he said, "is guilty of homicide; she herself of suicide, in thus concealing the real evil."

And yet the motive for all this mystery was the most frivolous that could be imagined; the mistress, fearing that if her malady became known to the nuns, they would refuse to allow her linen to be washed together with theirs, from the dread of infection, her servant had been bribed by double wages to keep her secret.

She died on the following day. The obsequies of nuns are most simple. Your entrance into the convent is made to the sound of military bands, and the firing of mortaletti; but the exit into the dark tomb is made with the simplest formality. She had been like a mother to me. In the action of lowering her remains into the grave, I asked and obtained permission to give my help. Blessed be her memory!

During two months the Abbess herself acted as mistress to me. She likewise became much attached to me, which increased the jealousy of the younger nuns and pupils. After that a new mistress was elected—another Caracciolo, but frivolous, cunning, a dissembler, and a fanatical priest-worshipper. This woman, though perfectly conscious of the secret scandals of the confessional and communion, still, as a rigid enforcer of formalities, imposed daily confession on me.

The Canon was satisfied with seeing me more tranquillized in mind; only, that while I denominated this tranquillity resignation, he would persist in calling it true vocation.

The year of my noviciate drew near its close. I had to provide 1800 ducats for the dotation, and 700 for the expenses of the ceremony, out of which, in this as well as in the first ceremony, 80 were reserved as a present to the confessor, and an analogous sum as a compliment to the nuns. The

whole amounted to 3000 crowns. How many millions in dower to the divine and humble Master of the fishermen?

The above sum was more than my family could command. I caught at this difficulty as a ray of hope to light me to liberty again; but the Chapter, fearing to lose me, consented to admit me with a diminution. I was much chagrined at this, however, for I learnt how many mortifications another had endured who had been allowed to enter on the same terms.

These bitter insults were not long in reaching me.

A nun, whose name was Theresa, sent to me to say that she required a small room which my aunt had given up to me, on the pretext that the retention of such a room was inconsistent with my dotation. I returned answer that the room was absolutely necessary to me; it was near the choir, where my duties lay.

This Theresa, an overbearing woman, who could not brook any opposition to her will, began immediately a system of annoyances, together with her sister Paolina, whose hatred of me was visibly increased.

One day I happened to be in the dormitory when her servant was there. This woman had the insolence to stop me, and say to me, with the gesticulation worthy of the lowest lazzarone,—

"You have dared to refuse my mistress the room she wanted! Do you know that she and her sisters have brought in here not one or two but four dowries, and not short, but the entire sum? They are mistresses here, more than any other nun in the convent; while you, nothing but a soldier's daughter, come in here without a penny in your pocket, and out of charity are allowed to become a nun."

I made her no reply, out of respect for myself. Could I have condescended to bandy words with this insolent creature, I could have told her that from the foundation of that convent the Caracciolo-Forino had brought in not four but hundreds of dowries, and could have reminded her that her mistress's brother was but a simple captain in an infantry regiment.

My mother, when she heard from me of the mortifications I had received, promised that she would try and arrange the matter of dotation more in conformity with the prejudices of the nuns. I made some observations in private on this point to the Abbess.

"How can I possibly help you, my daughter?" she replied. "You must keep yourself clear from the wickedness of others, in the best way you can. All I can tell you is, that if it requires the prudence of three to live in the world outside, believe me it requires that of twenty to live here within. In the world, if our passions are easily excited, they are also

easily managed; but, shut up, compressed, condensed, as it were, within this narrow receptacle, they burst out sometimes with such terrific force as to paralyze the intrepidity and calculations of the soundest diplomacy. In self-defence, you must arm yourself with a little guile and hypocrisy. Is there any meal without its salt?—without hypocrisy you will not get through."

With the consent of the superiors, one of my relations was induced to execute a bond, by which he appeared to constitute himself my debtor in the sum of 1000 ducats, and to make it over to the convent, to complete the sum of 1800 ducats, engaging himself to pay 50 ducats of yearly interest.

This matter being so arranged, and the preparations made, the 1st of October was appointed as the day on which I was to take the vows—the anniversary of my "vestizione." I was enjoined to cease all private study and readings, and to dedicate myself wholly, and for several weeks, to the customary observances. During the ten days preceding, the Canon appointed all my spiritual tasks; and he also preached a sermon in the parlour.

The priests say that taking the veil is a second baptism, which washes away all former sins; that should the individual die at the moment of pronouncing the monastic vows, she goes straightway to heaven, in the same way as the soul of the infant

that dies immediately on receiving baptism. Courteous reader, picture to yourself the practical applications of such a doctrine.

Over and above this, they pretend that whatever favour is asked of God at that moment, He is bound to grant it. I entreated for two boons—a sound sentiment for my vocation, and health for my poor sister Josephine. I obtained neither one nor the other. Josephine, shortly after, left this for a better world, and I, in time, became a prey to despair.

As I have spoken of the doctrines of the confessors in the interior of the monastery, I cannot pass over in silence an expiatory practice, to which the nuns of St. Gregorio attribute infallible virtue. There is on the right side of the communion a magnificent marble staircase, called the "Scala Santa," which has been the object of a Papal Bull. On every Friday in the month of March the entire community, commencing with the Abbess, down to the lowest lay sister, is obliged to ascend this on their knees, reciting a prayer at each step. In the accomplishment of this act a new indulgence is gained at each step, until, having reached the highest, the nun is completely purged of all sin, either of intention or act; and it is well understood that the spiritual director of the confessional—the interpreter of the Bull of Indulgence—is never slow in applying to the consciences of his penitents the portentous "*Toties Quoties.*" Thence

if the font of the profession washes without distinction all the sins committed during the pupilage and noviciate, the "Scala Santa" stands ever there to purify the veil from every little spot which might have gathered on it from that day forth to the limits of extreme old age.

A word further on spiritual exercises. The admission to the vows presupposes a preliminary examination. This examination I underwent from the Vicar-General of the Neapolitan Church. The primary intention of this was to inquire into the freedom of will in assuming the noviciate; but as everything degenerates in this world, this amounts now to a mere formality. The following may be given, in passing, as a specimen of the frivolous questions put to me:—

"If, on the demise of a female sovereign, the crown should by some chance be offered to you, would you, for the possession of an ephemeral and perilous diadem, renounce the high honour of being called the spouse of the Son of God?"

I answered at once, "No."

"If you received from the royal palace an invitation to a ball, and if you obtained permission from the Superior to go out, would you feel tempted to accept it?"

The same answer.

"If in this very moment a splendid equipage with

four beautiful horses came to the door, and you were invited to take a drive along the Riviera di Chiaja, would you go out?"

I still answered in the negative.

But I do not know what my answer might have been if instead he had asked—

"Is your heart dead to love?"

"If your lover threw himself now at your feet, and vowed to conduct you this very day to the altar, would you hesitate to go out?"

The interrogatory, with inimitable dexterity, steers clear through this rocky archipelago, and pilots only in the unruffled waters of inanity.

Clerical wiliness has provided against the possibility of a young girl unreservedly and distinctly expressing in this examination her abhorrence of the state to be embraced when forced thereto by the violence of parents or the persuasion of the confessor. They have decreed that the scapulary be torn from her back, and that within twenty-four hours she is to be driven out of the convent with the words—

"Out with you! out with the damned! You are unworthy to live in the company of the brides of Jesus!"

This harsh indignity, which no young girl has the courage to face, renders the year of the noviciate useless, and she finds herself fast bound from the hour she has taken the first veil.

The last and decisive day came. At seven o'clock on the morning of the 1st of October the Canon made his appearance, and he kept me in the confessional untill eleven, the hour the ceremony was to commence.

By degrees the church filled with those who had been invited to the ceremony. There were several persons of distinction amongst them; General Saluzzi had conducted thither the Hereditary Prince of Denmark.* He was travelling incognito, and had not yet reached his twentieth year. Both wore the ribbon of the Order of San Gennaro.

Cardinal Caracciolo intoned the "Pontificale," at the termination of which the persons invited crowded up to the communion-table, and I, accompanied by four nuns carrying lighted candles, approached it also.

Two of these nuns then presented an unfolded parchment before me, on which was written in Latin the form of oath, surrounded with gilded arabesques, and illuminated with pictures of saints, &c.

This I was to repeat aloud. My voice failed me, and I could hardly make it audible. I heard some one say—

"Louder!"

I made an effort to raise my voice, but in pronouncing the four vows of chastity, poverty, obedience,

* The late King Frederick VII.

and perpetual seclusion, I broke down altogether, and was obliged to stop for some moments.

At the same instant a lighted candle, carried by one of the nuns, fell from her hand extinguished. Singular augury!

When the reading was at last finished, I signed my name to it, as did also the Abbess and the Cardinal.

Within the communion rails was a spot covered with a carpet. Upon this I was directed to lie down with my face to the earth, and was then covered with a pall which had a skeleton worked in the centre. Four torches burned at the four corners of this, and the death-bell commenced to toll, whose strokes were responded to every now and then by a deep groan proceeding from the depths of the church.

A few moments passed thus, when the Cardinal, turning towards where I lay, called me forth, repeating the following apostrophe three times: "*Surge quæ dormis et exsurge a mortuis et illuminabit te Christus*" ("O thou who sleepest in death, arise; God will enlighten thee"). At the first repetition they raised the pall which covered me; at the second I rose to my knees on the carpet; on the third I stood upright, and walked towards the communion.

Another Latin phrase, not less a mystification than the preceding one, caught my ear—*Ut vivant mortui, et moreantur viventes.* The dead language of Latium is used to call social life a death. The language of

Dante and of regenerate Italy, on the contrary, calls death the monastic stagnation.

Finally, the Cardinal having blessed the Benedictine cowl which I put over the tunic, I took the communion. Then came the Abbess and kissed me, followed by the nuns in hierarchical order, for the same purpose; and after a short sermon the ceremony was at an end.

The guests then ascended to the parlour, where refreshments and sweetmeats were served. They waited until I had recovered some serenity of countenance before they opened the door to exhibit me to them. The Prince of Denmark approached with the General, and through the medium of the latter he inquired of me if I were perfectly content at taking the veil. On my answering affirmatively, his countenance expressed incredulity. He desired to examine my cowl; it was composed of black serge, with very long peak and wide sleeves, the last remembrance of Madame de Maintenon's monastic life.

It is the custom for the nuns to present a bouquet of artificial roses to the Cardinal and also to each of the bishops present at the ceremony. I offered one likewise to the prince, who accepted it with exquisite courtesy.

"Dead roses from one dead!" said my benefactor to his Royal Highness.

"Let us go, General; there is little satisfaction in witnessing the sacrifice of that young girl."

When all had left, the iron gates of the convent creaked again on their hinges, and a gulf separated me from the world, in the belief of all impassable. From thenceforth I was to have neither mother nor sisters, neither relatives nor friends, nor one on whom to rely; I had even abdicated my own personality. Still, in the recesses of my heart, I felt alive and palpitating that sentiment which bids us live, in imagination at least, with our fellow beings. In entering the sisterhood I had made the sacrifice of my personal liberty, but not that of my reason, which is an inalienable right. Higher still than that of St. Benedict, the voice of Christ spoke to my conscience; of Christ, the citizen of the world, the destroyer of sects, the leveller of castes, of party associations, the regenerator of humanity, united in one sole bond of love and preservation.

CHAPTER XI.

THE "CHARITY" OF NUNS.

"COME ye," writes St. Matthew, "come ye blessed of my Father: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: sick, and ye visited me; in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall they say unto him, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee: or thirsty, and gave thee drink? Then shall he answer them, and say: Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

These were the sentiments which inspired St. Benedict in the writing of his "Rules."

"Whoever shall ask aid of you, let them be received as Christ himself; then he will say to you, 'I was a stranger, and ye took me in.'"

Hearts opened to charity, for charity was personi-

fied in Christ. Then was beneficence organised on a large scale. Houses of refuge were erected, asylums for the stranger. The order of Monks Hospitallers was founded, foundling hospitals, orphan asylums: the sick, the poor, the old, the blind, the invalided, the shipwrecked, found special refuges. True hospitality, dogmatised hospitality, social hospitality, saw the light in the very cradle itself of Christianity, and was exercised for benefit of the infirm or the unfortunate, whom the pagan world oppressed or destroyed.

Amongst the ancients, woman held a no more important position than simply that of a means of reproduction. Philosophy itself had judged her as an incomplete existence. Christianity reveals her mission, which is that of charity and devotion. In England, in Germany, or amongst those nations where Catholicism is raised to the level of the age, the Sister of Charity tends the sick, comforts the suffering, and bestows on the most loathsome diseases the most unremitting solicitude. The daughter of St. Vincent de Paul tends day and night the aged sick, dresses his revolting sores, comforts the dying, and, become a mother without having ceased to be a virgin, warms in her bosom the abandoned little one. The fair title of "Maria del Soccorso" remains to the foundress of a pious society of women dedicated to the relief of poor strangers. The Bethlemite Sisters took the vows to succour the poor and sick, "even the un-

believers;" and in our own times the fame of Miss Nightingale sounds reverently throughout the old as the new hemisphere. "There is perhaps nothing more sublime or touching on this earth," says an eminent philosopher, "than the sacrifice which a delicate sex makes of its youth, its beauty, often of high birth, to tend in hospitals that mass of human miseries, the spectacle of which is as humiliating to our pride as it is repugnant to our senses."

From this charity, made divine by Christ, inculcated by St. Benedict, humanely practised by the clergy of uncivilized Christianity, how widely distant are the monks and nuns of Southern Italy!

An old proverb, suggested by experience, thus speaks of them: "They unite without knowing each other, live together without loving each other, die without weeping for each other."

Few sayings in the mouth of the populace are more true than the following:—"The religion of these hypocrites is no more than an article of linen. They put it on and off just as it suits them, and when it gets dirty they send it to the washerwoman."

I applied for the duty of Infirmiera,* and readily obtained it, for the greater portion of the sisters refused it. There were many who would not condescend to fulfil the functions of it; and it was also

* Infirmary matron or head nurse.

a fact that there were numberless instances of nuns afflicted with chronic diseases, bedridden, who during the long period of their confinement and suffering never once received the visit or the sympathy of their fellow inmates. Nor did these latter in that interval ever spare their uncharitable comments on the subject of the malady; they were sure to know for what sin it was that this, and not another disease, had been sent by God for their punishment, and at their pleasure consigned them to hell or purgatory.

The triennial office of the rigorous Abbess had reached its term, and my frivolous and hypocritical mistress (with the exception of my vote) was elected unanimously.

A preceding abbess, who during her term of rule had suffered much vexation, died shortly after this term had ceased. Her malady was a painful one, and her deathbed prolonged and awful. The nuns grouped round her bed, spectators of her terrible sufferings, would repeat aloud,

"She is suffering now for her bad abbesship. God is punishing her."

An old servant was suffering from an abscess which extended from the heel to the knee. On one occasion I was dressing the sore when the bell sounded for service. I made all the haste possible, but the applications took some time, and when I had reached the choir the service had already commenced, with

but five nuns present. I was reprimanded by the Abbess for a deed of charity, whilst the absentees, who had been passing their time in amorous discourse, passed unnoticed.

It was the custom in the convent to place the dead (after being dressed) on the ground, and four servants were appointed to this duty. One of these was a fiend in a religious garb. She refused to get out of bed to dress the corpse of a fellow servant. I rated her soundly. She then rose, and in a furious passion, seizing the body by the foot, dragged it into the middle of the floor, crying,

"By the Madonna! didn't you know how to do that much?"

The crash which the head of the dead woman made upon the tiled floor thrills me still with horror. The dead in the days of the plague were treated with more humanity. I appealed to the Abbess against this inhuman conduct.

"This is a matter," she replied, "which concerns the conscience of the lay sister more than my rule; besides, they all act thus."

This same servant was conducting a blind nun one Sunday to hear mass. Something occurred to annoy her, and she precipitated the poor blind creature from the top to the bottom of the stairs. The unfortunate woman died of the effects of this fall.

On another occasion she beat an invalid cruelly,

who used to call her (as she thought) too frequently, to be turned in the bed.

I made a representation to the Abbess that this barbarous woman should not be employed in the Infirmary, but my remonstrances were not attended to.

There exists in Naples an incalculable number of ladies, both married and unmarried, resident in the different convents, retreats, and conservatorii of the city. I might say that there were few families there who had not one or more members of the weaker sex in deposit there, like an object of mortmain in those receptacles of domestic superfluity. A lady who had thus for many years retired into a convent, suffered there a repetition of an apoplectic attack, and fell to the ground, but was raised and placed on a bed by a young servant who heard her fall, and found her covered with blood. The Superior reprimanded the girl for having aided her.

"Should I, then, have left her to die on the ground?" asked the maid.

"You should have called another of those 'ritirate;' they can take care of each other."

Not less wanting in all feeling of pity or sympathy are the obsequies of the nuns. A sincere grief, a genuine regret, the tribute of a few tears on the grave of a departed companion, are phenomena rarer to be found in a convent than are the commotions produced on the stage in the world outside it. That

apathy which was a virtue with the stoics is the effect of calculation and selfishness with nuns.

It is customary to bury the dead generally in the forenoon, and the corpse is no sooner consigned to the grave than the dinner-bell rings, and woe betide the servants should (from any cause arising out of this ceremony) the never-failing maccaroni be ever so little over-done.

In order to preserve intact the patrimonial hoard for the male heir, an affluent family had vowed the two eldest daughters to the cloister, and were reserving the third for the same lot. The girl was, in her twelfth year, taken for this purpose to Naples by her parents, and was accompanied to the door of the convent by a dog, which she had reared from a puppy, with singular affection. When the moment of separation arrived, this invaluable friend could not persuade himself that it was necessary to part from his beloved mistress. Warmer in his affection than the parents themselves, he allows them to take their departure without a lament; but no longer finding the object of his adoration in the ante-room, and after long and wistful watching of the door she had passed through, he commenced a piteous wail, as it were, to supplicate the maiden to hasten her return. Dogs not being allowed within the convent, the lay porter bestows a volley of kicks on him, and hunts him out; but the creature, insensible to the maltreatment,

returns to the spot where he has seen his friend for the last time, and when driven out again, stretched on the pavement of the portico, half frozen, he passes the livelong night in heartrending howls. On the morrow the whole neighbourhood, commiserating his condition, offer him food and caresses. The animal rejects both, intent on nothing but lamentation. For two days and nights this was uninterrupted; whilst, above, the young pupil was not less inconsolable. At last the nuns, annoyed at this occurrence, determined to put a sudden and effectual stop to it. The poor dog was found on the morning of the third day—killed—who knows how?—dead on the threshold of his mistress's living tomb

CHAPTER XII.

POVERTY AND HUMILITY.

A REMARK suggested to the father of German historical philosophy by his examination of the monastic spirit contains the matter of several volumes:

"A sentiment of tenderness seizes me," says the profound Herder, "as I contemplate that sweet seclusion, where souls, weary of the yoke and persecution of others, find within themselves both rest and Heaven; but it is precisely for that reason that our contempt for an isolation born of selfishness and pride manifests itself the more energetically — an isolation which, shrinking from an active life, places the destinies of mankind in contemplation, in apathy, in penitences; feeds on phantasma, and, far from extinguishing the passions, it foments the vilest of them all — a tyrannical and indomitable pride. Cursed be the excuses which some blind or perverse interpreters of Scripture make for the celibate,

as well as for that inert and contemplative life! Cursed be the false impressions which a fanatical eloquence is still able to stamp on the young mind after having for so many ages debased human reason!"

A burst of generous indignation! That which I am about to record here in reference to this will be the humble but veracious commentary to it.

The land of Henry VIII. and of Shakespeare possesses an expressive denominative which is wanting to other languages. Priestcraft may be interpreted as priestly guile, and proves that everywhere the clergy is infected with the same vice.

Our tongue possesses another distinction: it applies the same denomination to the tradesman and to the monk—both exercise a "professione."

To take a vow of poverty: what signification does this bear at the present day? One of two things: either trafficking for lucre under the cover of the cowl, or under that of the envied taxers of the public, enjoying in undisturbed repose their own substance, and also that of others.

How do nuns observe this solemn vow?

The external dress, it is true, is one of coarse woollen serge; but they wear beneath this the finest linen, as they use handkerchiefs of the finest cambric also. On feast-days they wear rosaries mounted in silver, and frequently gilt. It is true the dress does not make the monk.

The vow of humility forbids them to have bedsteads with iron heads; but that of poverty permits them three mattresses of the softest wool, feather pillows bordered with antique lace. The curtains, sometimes superb, are suspended from a ring in the ceiling.

They cannot openly display objects of luxury upon their wardrobes; but in a cupboard attached to the wall they keep the most antique and costly porcelain. They are not permitted to keep much money in their own rooms; but there is a place in the convent called the "dépôt," where that of each person is kept separately.

As to food: their abstinence does not yield to that of San Giovanni the "Faster." They eat of four dishes at dinner, one of which invariably is pastry; and of one dish at supper. The bread is of the finest quality.

It is forbidden to eat fresh fruit on Fridays. This does not, however, prevent them from eating preserves, jellies, &c., *ad libitum*.

They have the power to make a present of four ducats in the month; this, however, the Superior can grant leave to increase to eight, the Vicar to twelve, and, if it is desired to make it hundreds, the permission is applied for and granted in Rome.

Each nun has her particular patron saint, whose day she celebrates as a high feast. This solemn

occasion requires many weeks of preparation, and they try, in rivalry, to outvie each other in the expense, contracting debts when they have not the money, and wasting it in presents to the priests and monks who say mass.

The same is done on their own birthdays; nor is it possible to recount the excesses and consumption at Easter and Christmas.

But the primary occupation, the *summa rerum* of the convent, consists in the production of sweetmeats.

This occupation in nunneries answers to that of the hearth or stone of the hareem. Each nunnery has its speciality, and its particular kind, for which it claims celebrity. This one has a reputation for its "sfogliatelle," that one for its "barchighe," another for "pasta reale," a fourth for its "biscottini," for "monacelli," for "mostacioli." For a "sfoglitella" of the Carmelites of the Croce di Lucca, a Neapolitan of good taste would forego the delicious pine-apple itself.

Each nun has a right to the use of the oven for an entire day, to make her pastry: the day may commence from the preceding midnight. As this is not sufficient for many, a second, and sometimes a third day is required, the result of which is, that the poor servants, during these culinary operations, are unable to keep on their legs for want of sleep, and many fall ill. I have heard more than one old servant say that she had never seen the ceremonies of the Holy Week,

never having been permitted time to go into the choir, or look into the church.

A monk, both erudite and eloquent, being the Lent preacher one year, observed his audience lessen from day to day as Easter approached (the nuns were occupied with their pastry), until he was almost left alone. Observing but six sisters upon one occasion, he stopped in his discourse, and came down from the pulpit, muttering—

"I did not come here to preach to the chairs!"

In the distribution of this pastry, the relatives always get the inferior share. The priests and confessors, faithful to that precept (more than to any other evangelical one) which says, "He who loveth his father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me. If any one come to me, and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters, and his own life, cannot be my disciple" — faithful, I say, to this precept, destroy all parental affection in these women, persuading their penitents that they themselves are father, mother, brother, and sister, and life to them. Thus isolated, they become more assailable by the influence of their spiritual father, who, in the mean time, pockets the choicest and largest portion of the sweets.

Under this head I am tempted to record some instances of this anomalous dismemberment of family attachment.

Two nuns, sisters, were one day occupied in mental oration in the choir, measuring their hour of prayer with the sand-glass, as in the days of the Decameron. These nuns had a brother employed in some diplomatic office. Their bell rang in the lodge, and their servant ran to receive the message—one of fatal import. The brother, compromised with the Government, had put an end to his existence with a pistol—having died instantly.

"What is it?" asked they of the servant, who had returned pale as death. "What is the matter?"

"The servant of Prince . . . ."

"What does he want?"

"Your brother . . . ." and the maid stopped here.

"Is he ill?"

"Marame! dead!" answered the girl.

"Madonna del Carmine! How! dead!"

"He has shot himself!" and she related the message.

The two sisters looked at each other for a moment—then with consummate stoicism,

"Anna!" said one of them.

"Camilla!" repeated the other.

"His soul to glory! The sand is running out, let us finish our meditation."

Nothing more was said of the suicidal brother, with the exception of a passing remark at the dinner-table between the soup and the fish, as the expression is.

The announcement was made to a nun by letter of the death of her sister. "Let no one know this," she said to her servant; "for I should be obliged to fast, and I have no fancy to do this to-day, for I am very hungry—*me muorr de famme.*"

To return to the subject of the vow of humility. I may say, that rare as white flies are the nuns who do not make arrogant ostentation of their progenitors. There are some convents where they will not receive pupils unless they belong to families of the old Neapolitan stocks. San Gregorio Armeno has been from the remotest period consecrated to those of the Porta Capuana and Nilo;* and two girls, daughters of a noble mother but plebeian father, were refused admittance until it was formally exacted that they were to adopt the name of the former, repudiating the patronymic.

In their discussions it was ever the subject of dispute which was of better family.

"You had never anything better in yours than a bought countship, and that a younger son. My great-great-grandfather so-and-so quarters all the feudatory titles: prince of ——, duke of ——, marquis of ——, count of ——, and over and above was Councillor of State to his Catholic Majesty and Grandee of Spain."

"That may be all true; but he came of bastard

* Streets in Naples where the palaces of the ancient nobility were principally situated, the Quartier St. Germain of Naples.

blood for all that, as every boy in the street could tell you."

"And your pedigree! What a heap of blots there is upon it!"

There were those amongst them who arrogated to themselves the precedence in everything, even to their position on the Belvedere when a procession was about to pass; at their approach all others should forthwith yield their places. Nor did they hesitate to make others remove, should they be occupying a position which they chose to have.

They sent word to a preacher somewhat inclined to be cynical, and who had had the boldness to rate them upon the tenor of their lives, that he must not speak in that manner to them—the daughters of Neapolitan princes, dukes, counts, barons, &c. The Barnabite, justly indignant at that impertinent admonition, took the opportunity one day, during the delivery of a panegyric on St. Joseph, to advert in no gentle terms to the message which these humble servants of the Lord had sent him.

In fine, there are some convents where the Superior has her knee kissed—in others her foot.

As to the ignorance of these Abbesses, in what colours shall I depict it? A man of the world can with difficulty form an idea of the ingenuousness with which they display it. One of them, born in Naples, and who had never stirred beyond the

suburbs of the city, affirmed to a knot of young nuns, that though she had not entered the convent until she was thirty-two, she had never visited the Museum, nor put foot within the Theatre of St. Carlo, nor had seen the interior of the Villa Reale. Even the very conspicuous and central temple of San Francesco di Paola was totally unknown to her.

In the estimation of the same person, all the theories and discussions of archæologists on the catastrophe of Pompeii was pure moonshine. Pompeii was a city formerly inhabited by a sect of heretics, who hammered to pieces in the middle of their forum the miraculous statue of San Gennaro. The overhanging volcano, indignant at the sight of such profanity, belched forth instantaneously that deluge of burning ashes which buried for ever the heretical city!

I had been denounced before another Abbess as a reader of mundane literature, or that irrelevant to ecclesiastical subjects. A spy having informed her, I was caught "en flagrant délit" by the Superior with the book in my hand.

"What good book is this you are reading, my daughter? Let me look at it!" said she.

There being no time to conceal it, I was obliged to hand it to her, not without a lively disquietude concerning my justification of such a possession. The Abbess put on her spectacles, and having read the title of it, restored me the closed volume, saying—

"'The Memoirs of St. Helena.' Ah! the life of St. Constantius's mother! How they are perpetually calumniating this poor girl!"

It was 'A Memorial of St. Helena,' and a little later I satisfied myself that the eminent Superior of San Gregorio was entirely innocent of the name and fame of Napoleon the Great!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INSANITY OF NUNS.

THE loss of liberty, the monotony of existence, the frivolous nature of the daily intercourse and conversation, and the superficial education of those nuns, whose life has been passed there from their infancy, operate in such a manner that a third of the inmates are either altogether fatuitous, or at least weak-minded on some point.

This casualty, produced from the same causes, has long been a marked feature of penitentiaries on the solitary system. And if isolation be fatal to the reason of the imprisoned in the less temperate climates of Europe, and the still colder ones of America, how much more so should it be in hotter latitudes, and most of all in volcanic regions, where man cannot separate, without the most serious risk to his own existence, from the necessity to maintain the mental and corporeal faculties in permanent activity!

ıygienic statistic of the cloister has yet been .ed. It would be a study fertile in useful . In the expectation of such a work, I may ɔrmitted to mark here certain cases, equally ıy of the attention of Government as of the sity of the public.

ne nun, for some inexplicable reason, would never ɔh paper. Her servant never stirred from her -e; and whenever she read the Service, the maid .ned over the pages. In like manner, whenever -.e received a letter, it was opened, and held un- ɔlded before her until she had read it. In order, herefore, to keep her own secrets, she was obliged to have for servant one who had never even learned her alphabet. Another, whenever she attended mass on festas, would hold herself in a perfectly upright and immoveable position as long as it lasted, and would mutter sounds if she heard any noise. It happened that a nun who was standing by her side once fainted and fell on her shoulder. She never moved, and would probably have allowed her to fall to the ground if some others beside myself had not run forward and supported her. I have known another who when confined to bed had a habit of sticking pins all round the sheets; then would gather herself up on the pillow, and remain fixed there, in order not to spoil the marvellous symmetry of the bed.

The nunneries where is to be found the greatest

number of insane inmates are those of the "Romite," whose horrible and truly Brahminical austerities conduce more readily to insanity. This living tomb was founded by a bigot semi-alienated in mind, with the approbation and under the patronage of the Church of Rome.

I have already said (if the reader can remember) that the servant of my aunt the Abbess caused me a most disagreeable impression the first time I had met her; and in a few days I was confirmed in my idea that this woman had something unnatural in her actions, as she had in her physiognomy. This Angela Maria, entirely devoted to her toilet, neglected altogether her duties to my aunt and to myself. She allowed me to sleep in my bed for an entire week without once making it, and treated my poor aunt abominably. I had frequently repeated to this latter that she should not tolerate this woman's conduct so patiently, but she had replied that scolding her would only expose her to the risk of being beaten by her. Angela Maria confessed every Saturday, and would pass no less than four or five hours in the confessional on these occasions. On Wednesdays, after having spent more than an hour at her toilet, she would go down to the Parlatorio, where she would remain for an equally long period in the interest of her penitences with the confessor. On the evenings of such days she would become more eccentric than

ever, and my aunt always suffered increased ill-usage at her hands.

I was much attached to my poor old aunt, and it cost me much to see her so maltreated by this wretch, but I had no one to appeal to, as she herself was Abbess. I went nevertheless to the Prioress, and requested her to submit it all to my orders. This was granted me, and therefore she became the common servant, having now no mistress. This occurred during my noviciate; and until I had taken the veil this woman whenever she met me would not raise her eyes to me, but endeavoured to pass me or avoid me if she could, always muttering something between her teeth. On the eve of my taking the veil, I was told that she had prepared a little present, and that she wished to know if I would accept it willingly (this was a customary act on such occasions). I answered that I desired all the past to be forgotten.

She came and presented her offering, and begged pardon.

From that period she appeared completely changed; whenever she met me she would inquire affectionately about my health, was anxious to do anything for me, and, if indisposed, would come into my room to sit with me.

Nevertheless, her discourse perfectly sickened me, and her equivocal expressions filled me with dread.

This discourse was ever on the subject of her confessor, or her own personal attractions and good taste in dress, and on the injustice my aunt's new servant had done her in supplanting her and robbing her of her "darling girl." This meant myself. In fine, I became every day more confirmed in the idea that this woman's intellects were not in their normal condition.

Some months later, and the malady declared itself in its own horrible form. She would walk about at night like a spectre; she refused her food, and would break out at one time into fantastical actions; at another, remain in a moody state, which would last eight or ten days. As ill-luck would have it, her madness took the form of considering herself my own exclusive attendant, and all her former negligence was transformed into overweening solicitude. Assured of the malady which afflicted her, and which increased daily, humanity would not allow me to be severe with her. Fits of violence, however, commenced, and I warned the Abbess (the frivolous pupil-mistress) that she should be watched, for fear of harm to herself, or others from her. Her answer was—

"Try yourself to quiet her in her paroxysms; she knows your voice."

"But," I replied, "I am not the keeper of mad women—I cannot always look after her."

"Never mind—the Madonna will see to that!" was the reply of this silly Superior.

The affair became every day more serious. In defiance of all discipline, Angela Maria had allowed her hair to grow, and thrown aside her veil and "soggola," saying that she intended to quit the convent to be married.

At another time, in spite of the excruciating pain which she experienced in the occiput, she would contort herself in ungraceful and awkward attitudes, or dancing, twirling round, and filliping her fingers and thumbs, in imitation of the rattle of the castanets, she would chant with harsh and dissonant voice the verses of this canzonetta, in Neapolitan dialect:—

"Gìu mà, ca echicò non pozzo
Menà sola sta vita:
Io voglio fà la zita
Me voglio mmaretà.

"Me faje fà vicchiarelle,
Me faje jire a l'acito:
Gìu ma, voglio o' marito,
Mon pozzo sola stà.

"Si già s'è mmaretata
Teresa e Luvisella:
Pecchì a me poverella
Me faje patì accossì?

"Lo fecatiello a fforza
S'à da 'nfelà a lo spito:
Gìu ma, voglio o' marito,
Non pozzo sola stà."*

The nuns are forbidden to sleep with the door of their room shut, which shows a distrust little honourable to the brides of Christ. One night I awoke

* Oh, shut up here, I cannot
Endure this lonely life;
I wish to do as other girls,
I wish to be a wife.

I'll soon be an old woman,
Not only old but sour;
I want to have a husband,
Not pass these lonely hours.

Theresa and Luisella
(And I'm as good as they),
I'm left, and they are married,
Only the other day.

It's only with time and patience
The liver is forced on the spit;
But time and patience do it,
And a husband I will get.

feeling a rough hand placed on my forehead. Thinking I had only dreamed it, I went to sleep again. The next night I again felt myself touched; some one kissed me; I started from my sleep and saw Angela Maria, who said to me—

"Don't be afraid, it is I."

"What is it you want?"

"Nothing. I cannot sleep."

Gaetanella, my servant, slept in my room, and was very difficult to waken. When I, frightened by the insane woman, shook her, she muttered through her teeth, "Why don't you drive away that wretch?" and turning over, fell into a profound sleep.

These nocturnal apparitions became more and more frequent; my room was in a state of siege. Gradually the mad woman made me the victim of her insane watchings. Drawing back the curtains of the bed, she would seat herself half-naked on the chair, and talk in the wildest manner. I soon came to understand that the subject of her madness was the violent love she entertained for her confessor.

I often begged the Superior to find some remedy for all this. Worn out by the frequent interruption of sleep, and unnerved by incessant apprehension, I found myself falling ill.

The Abbess, without troubling herself further, would answer, "The Lord will help you!"

One morning while matins were being chanted in

the choir, a servant called out the aunt of the two pupils (Paolina's friends). She left the choir, and shortly afterwards returned very pale, asking permission of the Superior to absent herself from matins to go in aid of her nieces, who had been attacked by Angela Maria.

The Abbess made a sign to me to approach her, when she bade me go and tranquillize her. I obeyed, not however without having reminded her to find a remedy for this evil.

Angela Maria had locked herself into her room, and refused to open the door.

I wished to ascertain what she had done to the pupils, and directed my steps thither. Paolina, who was standing near the door of the room they had taken refuge in, seeing me approach, said to her friends,—

"Here is the person who told Angela Maria to beat you!"

At this apostrophe the two scholars rush forth from the room like a pair of unleashed mastiffs, and launch a torrent of abuse upon me.

This unjustifiable suspicion brought me to a sudden stop; already suffering for many days, I had no strength to support me in this unlooked-for wrong, and I fell to the ground in convulsions.

My voice, which in the moans of this nervous attack Angela Maria had recognised, caused her to

open the door, and she came out in her chemise. The moment she saw me on the ground she violently thrust aside those who surrounded me, and with herculean strength she took me in her arms and carried me off to my room, depositing me on the bed. When I had sufficiently recovered to be able to speak, I rated her soundly for her conduct. At first she listened to me weeping, then a violent fit seized her, and she tore her chemise to pieces, remaining perfectly naked; finally rushing out, she shut herself again in her room.

Paolina's words and imputation had given me a mortal wound. Though the hatred of the younger nuns was nothing new to me, I resolved to make no further sacrifice of myself for these people. My detestation of priests and monks had made them all my enemies.

I took advantage of the moment that the madwoman had shut herself into her room to have my bed transferred into that of my aunt. Angela Maria, having conceived a great aversion to this room, would never enter it.

In about an hour, half-dressed, she opened her door. She went into my room, which was separated from hers by four other rooms. Not finding either myself or my bed, she uttered frantic screams, and seizing a sharp-pointed knife ran about yelling frightfully, "Have they killed my girl? I will slit

their throats, every one of them, like hens in a coop!"

I did not stir. The nuns who were in the dormitory when this occurred in terror shut themselves in. The others ran to the Abbess, who sent to beg I would go to her.

"Dear Henrietta," she said when she saw me, "you alone have the power to remedy this misfortune which has occurred to the convent."

"How so, Reverenda?"

"None of the nuns dare sleep in the second story to-night where the mad woman is. Now, dearest, have your bed brought back to your room, and let Angela Maria's be taken there too, and you can keep her with you and prevent her from getting out."

"This is too much, your Reverence!" I cried, deeply indignant. "No; I cannot do it. I am ill. Besides, the woman's insanity has reached that degree now that she no longer recognises my voice; and they attribute what she does in her violent moments to my instigation!"

"Tut, tut! don't mind the tittle-tattle of every silly person. Both myself and the sisterhood will feel most grateful to you."

I still held out. The Abbess concluded, "You have taken the vow of obedience. It will be better for you to obey me."

Despotic as this injunction was, I bowed in obedience.

I ascended to the second story, where I found Angela Maria, knife in hand, walking up and down, and talking to herself. My God! what a horrible sight it was! She was a wild beast—a fury. Her wild protruding eyes were rolling in their orbits, and seemed ready to start from her head; her hair matted, her mouth contorted and foaming, her nostrils swollen with rage, her arm raised ready to strike the first who should come.

I stopped at the dormitory door, with my hand upon the key, ready to lock her in, in case she did not recognise me, and might attack me. I was alone, for no one would come with me.

I called her; she turned and knew me, and ran towards me with open arms, still holding the knife. I shut the door, and turned the key. On seeing me do this, she began to yell and cry. I said to her,—

"Throw away the knife—it frightens me."

She obeyed. When I heard it fall some distance off, I opened the door. The mad woman seized my hand, held it tight in both of hers, and covered it with kisses.

The condition she was in filled me with compassion. Taking possession of the knife, I scolded her for what she had done. She promised me she would never do it more.

She took me to her room; I made her open her boxes herself, and I took other knives out of it, and also scissors. The poor creature obeyed me without a word.

Having done this, I told her she was to pass the night in my room. On hearing this, she gave herself up to the wildest exultation, clapping her hands and laughing incontrollably. Her bed was carried into my room in a moment—a proceeding which gave great offense to Gaetanella. This woman suffered much from scurvy (a disease of frequent occurrence in the imperfectly ventilated atmosphere of the cloister). The blood which issued from her gums was believed by her to be the effect of hæmoptosis, and attributed to the state of perpetual tribulation in which she was kept by that "cunning and dissimulating Angela Maria."

Night came on; it was the month of August, and the bell for silence rang at eight o'clock. I went to bed. Gaetanella and Angela Maria did the same; the latter promising to remain quiet.

It was pitiful to hear her ravings, her restlessness, her constant turnings. I asked her what was the matter.

"I cannot stay in bed," she said; "my head burns, my ears are ringing."

She rose, opened the window, and drew in a long breath when she felt the coolness of the night-air.

The poor mad creature walked back and forward, uttering incoherent sentences. She cried and laughed and yelled in turns. Finally she returned to her bed and fell asleep.

Overcome with all I had gone through, I could hardly support myself. After shutting the window, I returned to bed, and fell also into a deep sleep.

After some time a violent palpitation again awoke me. There was profound stillness in the room. I raised the bed-curtain to observe what the mad woman was doing. The bed was empty. I looked in every direction; she was not to be seen. I got out of bed and put on a dressing-gown. Angela Maria's clothes were lying on a chair, her shoes were under the bed. I put my head outside the door, but the corridor was perfectly empty. I went out trembling, and entered her room—it was empty. I entered a second dormitory of immense length, lit at each end by a half-spent lamp, which only seemed to increase the darkness, looking like two sepulchral lights. Humanity rather than duty urged me forward.

The dormitory terminated with a well on one side, on the other an immense empty chamber, uninhabited by reason of its great size. This room inspired horror even in the day-time—frescoes of the worst style covered the walls, representing anchorites, saints, and hermits, with long spare faces of cadaverous hue and thin straggling beards, which the

nuns asserted had been known to leave the walls and move about, and even speak; had rung the bells and chanted mass at midnight. My limbs trembled, partly from a superstitious dread, which few are free from under similar circumstances; but more because I feared to find Angela Maria dead in some place where the darkness would have made this still more terrible. I was about to turn into this room when I perceived something white move in the vicinity of the well. It was the mad woman, who, in a state of utter nakedness, shoeless and dishevelled, was bending down, and with hands upon the parapet looking into the well, and in the act of precipitating herself therein. To give a cry and dart forward was but an instantaneous act with me, and I seized her arm with both my hands. She now no longer recognised me or my voice, but struggled violently, biting me severely to loosen my hold, and, being much stronger than myself, would have effected this, had not the idea of humiliating her suddenly occurred to me—I gave her a violent box on the ear. The blow seemed to recall her to herself for a moment, and she burst into tears. I then took her by the hand, and led her back without any difficulty to my room. There she threw herself on the ground, and broke into moans for some hours. Finally becoming somewhat calmer, she resumed her chattering.

As soon as it was light I wrote to General Saluzzi,

requesting him to come to me, and I recounted the whole affair to him. He went directly to the Canon Savarese, who at that time was acting as Archbishop (for Cardinal Caracciolo had shortly before died). He made a strong remonstrance to him on the manner in which I had been treated—having been made to act as keeper to the insane.

In a few hours the Doctor Cosimo Meo arrived, sent by Savarese to examine the state of the mad woman. As soon as he beheld her, though still at a distance, he exclaimed,—

"She is not only mad, but in the furious stage. Send for some one to bleed her."

Eight of the strongest of the servants hardly sufficed to hold her during this operation. Nor was a single drop of the blood received in the basin employed—being thrown in jets in every direction in the room. Ice was then applied to her head; and by the express wish of Savarese, on the representation of Meo, she was confined in a solitary cell, having been sent in the escort of a keeper to Calvizzano.

A priest kept an establishment for the insane there. The means employed did not avail in this case; and after a confinement for some time in the iron cell, and indescribable suffering, the unhappy creature breathed her last.

This circumstance had but increased my abhorrence for the nunnery, for it displayed still more

visibly to me the selfish and unfeeling habits of the monastic state and the little conscientiousness of nuns, who never hesitated to sacrifice me provided their own repose was not disturbed, and if they could save the expense of a care-taker of the insane by putting this most repugnant office on me.

It was not long after the exit of Angela Maria that a similar and equally fatal case occurred.

Under my direction in the laboratory was a lay sister named Concetta, a fellow townswoman of the poor mad woman, both being from Afragola. She was about thirty-six years of age, of great beauty, tall, and well made, with auburn hair, and eyes like those of a fawn, of perfect teeth and complexion; one feature only hindering her from being a type of almost perfect beauty,—her nose was somewhat too aquiline.

She was exact in the fulfilment of her duties, but omewhat vain and coquettish.

I had often observed her in the long summer days; during the hot hours whilst others slept, she would sit at a little window which looked into the street of St. Biagio de' Librai. This circumstance, joined to having observed a marked intimacy with a young porter attached to the convent, made me think she was not altogether content with her state, and would have willingly embraced the opposite condition.

The misfortune of her countrywoman made a strong

and unhappy impression upon her, and whenever any allusion was made to it she would stare wildly with her large eyes until she became perfectly frightful to look at.

For some months it did not go beyond this; only the insanity which was taking root assumed another form—that of melancholy. She wept frequently; never laughed; had no memory for the directions I gave her; confusing the drugs, and asking a thousand questions about the streets of Naples, of the happiness of those who enjoyed themselves there, and many similar things.

For the relief of my conscience in my quality of Infermiera, I warned the Abbess that Concetta's state demanded attention, requesting her to assign me another assistant in the Pharmacy; as this one confounded the medicines together, losing the whole day in changing them from one bottle into another, altering the labels, &c., so that I did not wish to be responsible for any serious mistake which might occur. The inefficient woman replied,—

"Do you know now that you are a bird of very ill omen?"

I was silent; nor did I ever again allude to the subject of Concetta.

A few days later the sister of this latter, a peasant, asked to see the Abbess. She had perceived the insanity of her sister, and she now begged the Superior to give some attention to it. The Abbess took no

further notice of this request, than to commend her to the protection of the miraculous Virgin del Idria, head patroness of the convent.

After this an old lay sister, who slept in the same room with Concetta, discovered her endeavouring to strangle herself with a handkerchief; her cries, however, prevented her accomplishing this.

"I will order the Litany 'Ora pro ea' to be recited forty times for her this evening," replied the Abbess, when this attempt was reported to her.

One Sunday morning before sunrise many of the nuns were attending mass. In order to reach the communion it was necessary to descend a long staircase which led into a small damp court, surrounded by a narrow corridor, but one of great length, and supported on pilasters. Above this was a terrace. When about half-way down I heard a heavy dull sound like that of a body falling. I covered my face with my hands, for without seeing her some presentiment told me it was Concetta. I hurried forward, and beheld the unfortunate creature on the ground motionless.

When I reached her I thought she was dead, and I called aloud for help.

More than forty nuns were at that moment in the communion who had heard my cries, but no one stirred. At last one came down the stairs and approached. We raised her from the ground, but she

was senseless. I then rang the bell of the sacristy, and summoned a priest to help.

Her right leg was frightfully lacerated. She had precipitated herself where some of the cement had from age fallen away from a pilaster, leaving a jagged and irregular surface. Two porters transported her into her room, the priest accompanying them.

After a short period she recovered consciousness, and made a sign that she did not wish this latter near her. He retired.

The spot where Concetta had precipitated herself being quite close to the church, the nuns, as they left the communion while Concetta was being conveyed away, began to scream and talk so loud, that those in the church became aware that something had happened in the convent. This suspicion increased as they saw the priest enter hurriedly. One woman got hold of the circumstance, and conveyed it to another; the news spreading with exaggerated comments and deviations altogether from the truth—the least being that the nuns had thrown one of their companions from above into the court.

Two hours later an inspector of police, with two other functionaries, made their appearance to inquire into the case. The Abbess tried to prevent the entrance of these "profane" individuals; but they were firm, and insisted upon entering.

"You know very well, sir, that without the express

order of the Holy Father I am forbidden to admit any one whomsoever within the cloister, were it the sovereign himself."

"And you, reverend madam, should not be ignorant that public order takes precedence of any commands you may have received from Rome."

"You confound me! In what manner do you infer that public order has been infringed in my convent?"

"There is a report that a lay sister has been precipitated from the second story with malicious intention, and has been frightfully maimed; and there are not wanting persons who impute this foul act to your Reverence."

Picture the stupor of the Abbess! With a profusion of bows she bade them enter, and conducted them herself into the presence of Concetta, who had by this time somewhat recovered her reason after the shock received. She underwent the examination with admirable self-possession, and testified to the fact that she alone had thrown herself from above, urged by irrepressible desire for death. When asked for what reason she, brought up in religious observances with more care than seculars, should thus make an attempt on her life, she uttered a deep groan, and essayed to reply; but whether from inability to express herself, or that she had repented of what she had done, she

remained silent. She then commenced yawning in a manner which threatened to dislocate her jaw, staring wildly about her, and, having rudely thrust back the hand of the inquisitor, she relapsed into insanity.

The inspector, having taken the depositions, departed.

On the Abbess's conscience, however, must have lain the burden of this catastrophe, for it was clearly her duty to have appointed a watch and guard over the actions of this woman, who for many months had shown such unequivocal symptoms of mental aberration. In a little closet belonging to her were found a rope fixed across it and fitted with a noose, also a paper containing poison: it was only the mode of death which had not been decided on.

Later in the day the Cardinal Riario Sforza, who had lately been appointed to the See of Naples, arrived. He reprimanded the Abbess severely for having allowed the affair to transpire, and the police to get in.

"Do you not know," he said, "that worldlings believe that all who are in convents are in a state of despair, and repentant of the life they have chosen? You, allowing this circumstance to become known, add weight to their calumnies. If the cloister be not a real tomb, as the holy canons desire it should be, why should it bear the name of such? The living

should never know the inmost and recondite scenes of the sepulchre."

The unfortunate Concetta lingered for twenty days, her leg having mortified. I never left her side, except for the morning and evening summons of the bell. I gathered from her incoherent words that the poor creature was in a condition she wished to hide by death. She would not permit the priest to approach her, nor would she confess. The weak-minded nuns, fully convinced that she was "possessed," sent for a "red-cross order" monk for the purpose of exorcising the demon. His exorcism, performed with imposing solemnity, had no effect, much to my disappointment. I should have been curious to see the evil one. The nuns, with open mouths and incessant signing of themselves, stood around, awaiting the exit of the fiend of darkness, but in vain, it was not yet time.

The confessor could only get entrance to the room to repeat a prayer at the moment she breathed her last, and when she had no longer the strength or the consciousness to expel him thence.

Her beauty, which had entirely disappeared during this privation of reason, then resumed its place on the inanimate remains. What serenity then reposed upon features up to that moment transformed by insanity and altered by inward suffering! She died at

sunset. A ray of the declining orb, passing across the window, came like the angel of death, tremulously touching the golden points of her tresses. In another moment that messenger of divine mercy had flown.

I scattered the leaves of a handful of crimson carnations upon her lifeless remains.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONVENT THIEVES.

LET us imagine a band of thirty malefactors, who having stopped, beaten, and despoiled you, hold a consultation as to whether they should not also take your life; would there not be found perchance amongst these one less sanguinary than the rest, who should desire that your life be spared? And if, instead of thirty, there were fifty or sixty, would not the increase be in your favour? Suppose, then, that troop composed of a hundred or five hundred individuals, I would wager ten to one that your life would be spared. Out of such a number it would be impossible that one should not be found willing to save you from an unjust doom?

I cannot cite a clearer example than this to show that vice and malevolence more readily find refuge in little than in extensive communities. "Woe be to him that is alone!" says the Scripture. Selfish-

ness has its abode in a part of, but not throughout all humanity; and Adam, created in the image of God, symbolises the whole of mankind, rather than an individual. The convent encloses within its walls all the vices of the city, without possessing the virtues or advantages of this latter. In proportion as modern civilisation progresses in the path of liberal association, just in the same degree the monastic community assumes the form of a tolerated camorra. For the honour of truth, I will acknowledge that there are to be found nuns exemplary in every respect, and worthy of reverence; but their number is so small, that it is lost sight of in the immense majority of the evil doers. To the female monastery may be justly applied that expression in Ecclesiastes, "One man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all these have I not found."

Thieving is a common vice in convents. I could not have believed this, had I not been an inmate therein, and learned this through my own experience. It was therefore to my no small astonishment, on the first day of my entrance, that a lay sister hinted to me, under her breath, that I should not leave unwatched on the drawers a box of confectionery which had been given me, as it would be a miracle if I ever saw it again! I thought she alluded to the rapacity of some of the numerous workpeople, porters, carpenters, &c., occupied in the convent, whom I had

observed; but after a few days' residence I became aware, to my intense disgust, that the thieves were the nuns themselves, and that it was absolutely necessary to keep everything under lock and key, from the bread to the needle. If the Abbess looked to the solidity of the cloister lock, it behoved each nun to keep guard over her own particular one.

At one period this vice had taken such root that not a week passed without a theft. A pupil having forgotten her key in her drawer, five piastres disappeared from this. A coffee-service of another had every silver spoon abstracted. A rosary with medallions, which had been left in the choir, was stolen from thence. A servant deposited a tunic on a chair, whilst she went to fetch the money to pay the dressmaker: at her return it was gone. A silver holy-water recipient, which stood at the head of my bed, was stolen from myself. I preferred losing that much-valued family relic rather than increase the number of my enemies, and I said nothing about the loss. On another occasion, a napkin, with a broad lace border, was abstracted from me; but, as I had already manifested some suspicions of the thief, it was left in a corridor with the initials half-picked out.

It is to be observed that these thefts occurred precisely in places where workmen, &c., had no access, and on Sundays, when these or artisans were excluded. Towards the evening of a Saint's-day, feeling some-

what indisposed, I had retired to my room, and I lay on my bed. When the bell for silence was about to be rung, I heard loud cries issuing from the story beneath, together with a running backwards and forwards in the corridor of the nuns. Sudden deaths being of frequent occurrence in the convent, it immediately occurred to me that a misfortune of that nature had befallen some one. I got up, and, dressing in great haste, was proceeding to see if all was well with my old aunt, when I met the blind nun, who was leaning on her servant, and weeping bitterly.

"Oh, what horror! what horror!" she repeated, with a gesture of repugnance.

"What mean all these cries, Aunt Constance?" I asked anxiously.

"What, do you not know of the sacrilege? what horror! They have robbed the Madonna del Buon Consiglio!"

"Is it possible?" I returned.

"True as that judgment will overtake them."

I entered the choir, and found in fact the little altar of the above-mentioned Virgin despoiled. A painting by a master hand with a broad frame was enclosed within a glass case, some six inches larger, and always kept locked. In the space between the glass and the picture some bouquets of silver flowers, of no mean workmanship, were deposited. The lock

had been forced, and these flowers, together with the silver crowns of the Virgin and Child, were wanting. Not content with these pious offerings, the thieves had likewise carried off other valuable objects, such as earrings, rings, diadems, necklaces, and other jewels, leaving the canvas all perforated with the little nails or pins by which the above ornaments were attached. It was a melancholy spectacle, this vandalized image all perforated and torn through the hurry to escape.

On the morrow the Superior sent for the Vicar, and summoned also the functionaries of the convent, not omitting the mistress of the servants. I unfortunately filled this office, together with that of Infermiera and chemist-officer of the conventual hierarchy, which, to say the truth, brought me some little benefit, as I took the opportunity to obtain a superficial smattering of materia medica, and some clinical knowledge.

The Vicar enjoined me to summon every servant to the Refectory, with the exception of those whom any illness or infirmity freed from suspicion. They were sixty-two in all.

These women, whom Christ in His infinite mercy selected as spouses from amongst those descended from Adam, certain that there existed no power to dismiss them after they had once pronounced the vows, behave with the utmost insolence to the choral

nuns, and always with impunity. With the exception of a few who obeyed, shedding tears of mortification, all vented on me the most abusive language. One of these said,—

"Haven't you got a pair of hands as well as I? Who knows that you are not the thief yourself?"

"You will do better," I answered, "to keep such remarks for those of your own class."

"We are all chips off the same block," she replied with a sneer.

Prudence kept me silent. It required an hour to collect the Community into the Refectory, partly by entreaties, partly by threats.

The Vicar, who in the mean time had been closeted with the Abbess, enjoined her to keep this scandal close, as the affair of the police was still fresh; citing, as I learned afterwards, the maxim, "Wash your soiled linen at home."

But his admonition to the sisters, when ushered into his presence, was of another kind, and severe to their hearts' content. I shall not readily forget it.

"Your convent," he cried, "is become a 'Bosco di Bovino,' * where barefaced robberies are committed: there, at least, there are no Madonnas or saints to rob." He then interdicted the Communion to the thief, and, in the name of the incensed Virgin, en-

* The Forest of Bondy of Naples, a wood in the vicinity of the city.

joined the immediate restitution of the stolen objects, hinting at the possibility of a solemn ecclesiastical censure for the entire Community.

Some began to cry, some were indignant, one fainted, others quitted the Refectory, mimicking the face and gestures of His Eminence. On the following morning, by universal concert, all took the Communion, and two days later was found upon the despoiled altar six ducats. As this sum did not constitute a twentieth part of the value of the things stolen, it was supposed to be an instalment of its future restitution; but time went on, and either the matter cooled or the thief gave herself no further trouble to deposit a second payment. There only remained then in the minds of the majority the disagreeable conviction that the theft could not have profited the perpetrator if the same had not had accomplices both within and without the convent.

One hundred ducats were found missing from the desk of the Depôt (I have elsewhere spoken of this convent money-box). This sum had been set apart to the formation of an annuity to defray the expense of lighting a lamp before the image of the Immaculate.

In making up the accounts of her abbesship, my aunt found a deficit of several thousand ducats in the cash-box of the Communita. The poor woman could not comprehend this enormous deficiency; she had

never kept the key herself, but had intrusted it to the secretary and to other old nuns. Nor was any light ever thrown on this transaction, which caused her such chagrin as effectually to shorten her life.

Another class of robbery practised in the nunnery was the scandalous profit derived by the nuns in their traffic with medicines and confectionery.

I have elsewhere mentioned that I acted as chemist, but in this office I was in reality only the assistant of an old num, who, owing to her advanced age, seldom came down into the laboratory, and satisfied herself by sending me her orders through her servant.

I remained for five years in this occupation, continually making remonstrances on the excessive prices charged, which should for every reason have been lower than the sums charged by the public chemist, as we neither had to pay the rent of shop, nor the expense of lighting, nor assistants, nor to give presents to doctors; besides, we should not have had a view to gain, but reciprocally humane motives.

I made the most energetic protests upon being ordered to charge twelve grana* the ounce in retailing a medicament which I myself had purchased for the convent for four carlini a pound, that is to say, a quadrupled profit on the wholesale article—a usury of 80 per cent.

* 10 grana make a carlino, equal to 4*d*. English.

I might add a quantity of similar abuses and misdeeds committed during the period of my abode within the different nunneries, and which remained unpunished, as well from the *amour propre* of caste as from want of a judicial police. The priorate, the wardrobe, the catering, the agencies, and other branches of administration—what endless corruption do they not conceal? But need I weary the courteous reader further with an account of such unpalatable matter? To give a wide but correct idea of the abuses of every kind which infest the convents of both sexes, it is enough to remember that, under the past government, theft and *camorra* transuded, so to say, copiously through all the pores of Neapolitan society. Starting from the throne, it traversed the sanctuary and diffused itself throughout the arteries of the underlying population. To whom is not known the answer of King Ferdinand to that Minister of State who had the courage to denounce to him the peculations of an eminent functionary?—"It is true, he is a rogue and a thief; but, for all that, he is a good Christian."

This family linen is too foul; let us turn over the page.

CHAPTER XV.

ACOLYTES.

WITH the exception of the republic of San Marino, every state, however small, has its capital; and there is no capital which does not contain its two descriptions of edifices—one sacred to devotional purposes, the other dedicated to purposes of relaxation. Now, the convent, which forms a little republican state, placed under the high dominion of the Holy See, has also its metropolis, furnished, no less than the others, with sacred functions, and its dramatic entertainments.

The metropolis of the convent is the Church. Two parts, two separate functions, every one attached to the service of this Church must know how to perform—one that of a holy ministrant, the other that of a dramatic performer.

We have spoken enough of the dramatic mission, of the confessional, and of the dualistic doctrines of confessors; let us make now a slight digression on the theatrical department of the acolytes.

Four youths, aspirants to the priesthood, were annexed to the establishment for the service of the Church. As soon as they should take holy orders they would have to quit this service, being no longer allowed to remain there; and having the necessary studies to go through, they are, therefore, replaced by others.

The younger the luckier. These young men had their protectresses in the convent—and the protection of a nun is worth something. Several rich persons and Neapolitan ecclesiastics had bequeathed from an early period, in favour of San Gregorio Armeno, for the purpose of founding patrimonies, chaplaincies, and dowers, and purposes of benevolence. These youths, then, were fortunate if they could secure the good graces of the despotic ones of this sisterhood, who dispensed these benefices at their will, for they were sure to come in for patrimony or chaplaincy; and in such case the protectress invariably defrays the expenses of the ceremony itself. One, whom I remember, having become, "Dei gratia," priest, had not only his expenses paid, but, having managed to insinuate himself proportionably into the heart of the nun-patroness, she caused him to be fetched on the day of the ceremony in her family-coach, with gala liveries and appointments, and sent to his house a sumptuous banquet for twenty-four persons. The Abbess approved these unbecoming prodigalities—

nay, would encourage them, saying, "I myself have done the same—amuse yourselves, my poor girls; faith, it has been always done!"

At the same time, in under tones, she would caution them not to let me see anything of this. They were aware that I did not approve of their mode of acting; my strictness was a great restraint on them; and they would often break off their conversation at my approach, and in sending the above better dinner they endeavoured to do it clandestinely, so that its expensiveness should escape me.

It was the custom during the Holy Week to decorate a portion of the choir magnificently, to commemorate there the ceremony of the feet-washing. The symbols of the Passion were placed on the altar, together with all the private plate of each of the nuns, and an incalculable number of candles.

The four acolytes, who were dying with holy curiosity to be spectators of this spectacle, would wait until the church was closed on the night of Holy Thursday, and until I myself had retired to my room. They would then place a long ladder against the screen of the choir, above the high altar, and, mounting by it, would seat themselves on the projecting cornice, and keep up a prolonged conversation with the nuns, their particular friends. Knowing of this project from the day previous, I took care to retire to my room, to leave them at liberty.

I had now been almost eight years in the convent, and they had been unable to discover in me the slightest sympathy for priest, monk, or acolyte, not even for my confessor; who still, notwithstanding the annoyance I manifested at it, managed under this or that pretext to make me come down to the Communion almost daily. Not that I wished it to be thought that my heart had become estranged to love, or that I wished to judge austerely--a rigid Cato—those who love. Not so! I disapproved of the hypocrisy and the wish to seem virtuous; and the vindictiveness with which they persecuted any unlucky one who by any rare chance had conceived a predilection for any one who was not either priest or of sacerdotal calling. I detested this selfishness of caste, these feignings. I abhorred their condition in opposition to the laws of nature; I abhorred their mode of thinking. If they had frankly confessed that they entertained an affection for this or that priest, this or the other friar, I could as frankly have shared my pity with them, as it had often happened to some young sister, or pupil, or servant, who had opened her heart to me; I could have pitied her with a heart prone to all human sentiments. My own still beat under the coarse serge; it was ever the same susceptible one which had already loved and suffered much. I was once on the brink of rekindling its smouldering fire. God gave me help to suppress this; a passion would have only made me more wretched.

A medical man whom in my quality of Infermiera I frequently met and accompanied through the wards was the object of this unrevealed attachment: he did not perceive it, and did not correspond to it. As I accompanied his steps in his frequent rounds, with eyes cast on the ground, and the feeling of abdication I had made to every tender emotion, I felt that, under the vow of monastic chastity, I should only have been an object of contempt in his eyes if a single look had betrayed me. Ah! those who have not put on the sackcloth know not how deep to the cries of the heart is the isolation of the cloister. He knew nothing of my struggles to subdue those rebellious palpitations: he therefore knew not that I triumphed. I learned afterwards that his heart was elsewhere. He died in the prime of life.

After two years passed in the capacity of Infermiera, I was nominated to the office of Sacristan. This duty, more than any other, brings the nun in contact with the priests. It was the opinion then of the great portion of the sisters, that it would end with my falling in love with some one of them, and a conspiracy was formed of the most active of them sworn to make me fall.

The Sacristan whom I replaced, in handing me over the duties of the office, told me that three of these acolytes were unpunctual, and that I should employ rather the one who was most exact. This

was an excellent woman, and I followed her advice. In the mean time the conspirators watched my movements with anxiety, in the expectation that I should fall sooner or later into their trammels; and the preference which I accorded to this one soon gave them this hope. Though he was a youth most uninteresting in every respect—in person, education, and condition of life—he served their purpose; and they made every effort to bring about their design. They naturally began with him, the weaker side. What iniquity does not idleness engender! Some one of the association would find every day some excuse to go down to the Communion, and say to the acolyte—

"Now you must be satisfied that you have got a young and active Sacristan, eh?" or, "It seems the Sacristan likes you very much, for she always calls you and intrusts all to you."

I have mentioned elsewhere that I suffered much from nervous attacks: these became almost periodical with me. Whenever I was ill they would call him, and, with the shamelessness of low women, give him my remembrance. On one occasion they gave him a love-letter in my name, and at another stole a small object out of my room, which they conveyed to him under the same title.

The youth began to give way.

They once told him that I was very ill: he began to cry, unable to conceal his trouble.

"It is all up with him!" said they amongst themselves, rubbing their hands, and chuckling with delight.

I soon became apprised of the grotesque passion of the young man, and, discovering the embroglio of the love-letter and the false gift, I turned on the intriguing nuns with the most energetic denunciations, and showed him how he had been imposed upon, and demanded a restitution of the objects. He would not give them back.

He did not conceal his passion from me. I reproved him frequently, but I had no means of avoiding being seen by him, as my duties obliged me to speak to him. He would reply that he had not strength to subdue a passion which the nuns themselves had fostered. The fact was, that the poor creature was really deeply enamoured of me. His face had become like a lantern, his nose pointed, his eyes sunk; his mouth, naturally large, had, from his excessive loss of flesh, taken the proportions of that of a lizard. I reproved him without mercy. "You idiot," I said to him, "do you not see that you have become the tool of a bevy of nuns no less silly than designing; who, while they amuse themselves with your simplicity, are on the look-out for a still greater advantage—that of annoying me; and further still, if possible, of sinking my reputation here to a level with their own? Recover yourself, overmaster this silly

passion, and from henceforth use more discretion in the discharge of your duties, if you do not wish to lose both your bread and your reputation."

To this he replied that he had not strength to subdue a passion which had reached such a degree of intensity.

"In that case, there is but one resource," I returned; "a hard one, it is true, and inevitable."

"Speak; your counsel shall be a law to me."

"The jests of these women are perfect tiger's paws: to-day they play with your simplicity, to-morrow they would dig your grave. Listen to my advice. Seek a living in some other church, and bring me at the earliest moment your resignation."

The dry and hard tones of these words of mine contrasted with the internal feeling of pity which this occurrence gave rise to in me—an occurrence which tended to deprive the poor wretch of his bread.

This interview, which hardly lasted ten minutes, and terminated by a flood of tears on his part, was interrupted by the arrival of the Church Sacristan. Convinced, however, that the nuns were concocting a nefarious scheme, and much grieved to ruin the prospects of the poor youth, whose principal fault was that of being somewhat stultified, I fixed on a plan for remedying this more consistent with humanity.

I went to the Abbess and begged her to appoint another Sacristan, as I was not fitted for that office. She refused to do so on the plea that there existed no

precedent of a nun's resigning her office before the expiration of a year. My confessor, whom the affair displeased, added his entreaties. She would not yield. Irritated one day by my reiterated applications on this subject, she said, "In fine, why do you wish to give up the office? Is it because some silly woman says you are in love with the clerk? What a goose you are! Haven't they done this before, and will they not always do the same? If you have a grain of sense, you will pay no attention to this tittle-tattle."

Things progressed in this way until the episode arrived at a spontaneous dissolution. One day, whilst I sang in the choir, the love-sick chierico fainted in the church from the emotion. The church was crowded—the confusion great, the priests in the sacristy in a state of commotion, and the chierici enjoying the scene; the nuns, as the mask had fallen, began to launch their arrows at their victim, and broke out with, "The stupid creature! what an idiot! how absurd! the holy mass is turned into a farce! these scenes are a disgrace to the convent."

I shortly afterwards found the young man in a flood of tears. "We are all four dismissed. My God, what will become of me!" he exclaimed, as well as his sobs would permit him.

"All four dismissed! have you then dragged the others into your own ruin?"

"No! the ruin is only for me; the others go only

for appearance; they will be taken back again; I am the only one who will never return."

"I am astonished that they have dismissed you with even so much urbanity," I concluded. "I am truly sorry for you, but your situation in this place had become insupportable."

The inhabitants of volcanic regions are full of fire as their wines are, and I am a Neapolitan. Inflamed with indignation, I went at once to the Abbess.

"Had you accepted my resignation, when I urged it on you with so much earnestness," I said, with considerable vivacity, "you would not now be driven to put in force a provision which redounds as little to the interest of your convent as it does to that of these poor youths. What is done cannot now be undone. One explanation only remains for me to ask of you, and this regards my own personal dignity. Is it real, positive, or only a blind, this general dismissal of the chierici? In other words, have you not reserved the intention to recall, after a little, three of them, to inflict exclusion on one only?"

"No!" she returned, "Heaven forbid! the dismissal shall be general and definitive."

"Have you sufficient firmness to stand against the machinations of the nuns who protect these others?"

We were at the moment close to a chapel dedicated

to the Virgin. The Abbess, turning towards the image, raised her hand and said,—

"I swear by the most holy Maria, that not one of them shall return."

"And I swear that, if they do, I will leave a place where I am shut up with such ruthless enemies," was my rejoinder.

We parted in peace: but the poor woman was one more of words than deeds; she was calculating the votes which were indispensable to her in her re-election as Abbess—eight days later three of the chierici returned. Nor did the intrigue end here. The conspirators made an attempt likewise to blacken my conduct. To what will not cloister perfidy stoop!

That one of these four acolytes who was expelled was denounced to the Cardinal by the confessors and monks of the church itself; who, with an equal solicitude to pander to the wishes of his creatures, obliged him to quit the clerical dress altogether.

The Abbess had broken her oath. I would keep mine faithfully.

From that day I fixed unchangeable and immovable in my soul the resolution to quit a place where the machinations and the gall of envy were so rife.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHIARINA.

THE moral sufferings and incessant agitations I had gone through, the coercive action of the cloister, the sedentary life, the unhealthy atmosphere of the convent during the winter months, and above all the intrigues of which I had been the victim, had affected my health too seriously for me not to look for some means of safety. In this interval my favourite sister Josephine died, she who above all others was wont to compassionate my misfortunes. The grief to have been unable to bestow a last embrace, and even to see her before she quitted this world, caused me to feel only the more repentant of a vow so opposed to my nature. My position, too, was somewhat changed. I had now reached my majority. I could consider myself disposer, sicut in quantum, of myself, possessing a small annuity. I could make choice of another asylum less coercive and more suitable to my disposi-

tion than the cloister, if I did not wish to have recourse to the hospitality of my mother's second husband. She had become seriously grieved at seeing me reduced almost to despair, nor did she conceal some remorse of conscience at having immured me in the cloister. She promised me then her co-operation in any attempt of mine to procure a greater or less enlargement, and kept it faithfully.

My position in the cloister also was somewhat different. A malady of a few days' duration had carried off my aunt — she who had officiated as Abbess for so long a period. I had taken into my service a young girl who had shortly before entered the convent, a native of a small town in the vicinity of Naples. Although her family had gone to considerable expense in entering her, and she had not yet begun to feel the nostalgia of her liberty, she had conceived such an attachment to me, that she protested every day she was ready to follow me wherever my lot should lead me.

In the neighbourhood of my prison was a house, at one of whose windows I frequently observed a young religieuse in amicable intercourse with her relations. I examined her again and again—I scrutinized her dress. There was no doubt she belonged to some cloister—not to that class of bigots denominated Monache di Casa. By what means had she recovered the inestimable boon of recrossing the

paternal threshold? The desire to gather anything relating to this portent gave me the most lively solicitude. After long researches I learned finally that she was a cloister nun of Nola, and had been for a considerable time out of the convent, for which she had given satisfactory reasons; and renewing her leave of absence every six months, was enabled to effect an indefinite prolongation of it. What a ray of hope for me in the darkness of my prison! Why should not I seize on such a precedent, which haply Providence had sent to my despair, and tread the same road? Was not the shattered state of my health true—was it not evident—was I not subject to nervous attacks, to convulsions which were undermining my constitution?

Fat, fresh, even rosy, full of life and spirits, were the greater portion of my companions; absence of care, idleness, selfishness, apathy, fattened them as the coop fattens fowls. I on the contrary only became the more pallid and declining; my cheeks became hollow, my eyes dim; my hair fell out in handfuls.

One of the physicians of the convent drew up a certificate for me. This, together with a memorial, I despatched to Rome. So certain had I made myself of its successful issue that I had begun to count the hours and minutes which yet remained for me to suffer. I would say to myself—now is the

courier delivering my petition — now Pius IX. is reading it with favourable intention—at this moment the favour is being granted—the paper sealed—delivered to the respective authority—despatched to Naples—in two days the courier returns—this is Thursday—on Saturday morning, Farewell to you all.

Ah! how long must these two days seem!

The Canon was greatly disturbed at the step I had taken, and endeavoured to weaken the poesy of my hope with every blow which the scepticism of his logic and the cynicism of his profession could help him with. He did not fail to make a strong complaint to the Abbess of the atrocious conduct of the nuns, adding—

"My penitent is a person of firm resolve, though few words; be sure that if she has said that she will leave this place, she will do so."

"St. Benedict will not allow it. Whoever has once put on his dress will never leave this, dead or alive," replied the poor woman.

Solicitous as I was to leave this odious place, there was, nevertheless, one powerful motive of regret that I should leave behind me. This was a young girl in whom my interests were strongly concentrated—a girl whom I loved like daughter or sister. She belonged to a family in easy circumstances in Naples, and had been placed in my charge shortly before the

above occurrences. Chiarina, such was her name, had been confided at first to an aunt, a nun of 40 years' standing in the convent, and at that time in second childhood from age. The servant of this lady (a woman of brutal character) acted for both aunt and niece. The former, aware of the tyrannous disposition of this woman, asked me to take charge of her, every pupil having a nun assigned to her as mistress. She was 16 years of age, but looked hardly 10—a seven months' child—her existence was a miracle. On losing her parents she was left with two brothers, the younger of whom was pursuing his studies in a distant city. The elder was obliged to be constantly travelling in the interest of the business in which he was occupied.

Beautiful as an angel in face, she was unfortunately deformed in person, and in delicate health. She had aneurism and dilatation of the heart, which had enlarged the cordial region, and suffered likewise from an obstinate cough and continued palpitations, which rendered her respiration very distressing. Her mind was as fair as her face, docile, confiding, and artless—above all endowed with a prudence which I, her elder by many years, could never imitate.

This child inherited two misfortunes in the cloister, over and above those I mention. One was having me as her mistress; the second, that of having a servant who acted, I will not say as a stepmother, but

as a tyrant to her. As I was hated by the younger nuns, she, for the sole reason that she was under my care as pupil, was likewise hated. As to the servant, she was a monster of inhumanity, a wild beast in human form. As the child was rather wealthy, this woman was determined she should take the veil, for no other motive than that she might perpetuate her possession of her, accustoming her gradually to her despotic dominion. The malady of her young mistress, however, formed an obstacle to this; for it was necessary to conceal this from the eyes of all, lest the nuns should exclude her from the Chapter.

How was she to hide her cough and distressed respiration? By dint of intimidation and perpetual scolding. If she heard her cough she would revile her in the most plebeian manner, even stopping her mouth with her hand. She would not permit her to ascend the stairs leisurely, but forced her up a hundred steps without allowing her to take breath. The lividity of her face and her gasping respiration showed her suffering. I never failed to admonish this creature with the utmost severity, but Chiarina told me that my scoldings only increased her maltreatment when this woman found her alone.

It had occurred to this Megæra to try to straighten my pupil's body, the better to conceal her deformity; and for this purpose forced her to wear a pair of stays stiffened with iron rods. Every morning the

poor child, with face of deathly hue, and faint voice, would entreat me when alone in the novice's room, "Aunt Henrietta, for pity's sake unfasten my stays! I am dying." Unfastening these, I retained her with me during the day; but was obliged to lace them tightly again at evening. She would tremble at the very thought of this woman.

The surgeon of the Communita, Signor Gianspietro, had requested me to watch over the girl, having a paternal attachment for her as he had attended her mother in her confinement. His interest did not meet the views of the servant, and Chiarina was by her bidden to avoid him. One day the surgeon was seated in the porter's room waiting for me to attend him in his rounds in my capacity as Infermiera. Chiarina passed that way, taking her hand he seated her on his knee. I arrived at that moment, and gave him some account of her health, which became daily worse. Resting one hand on her shoulder, he placed the other on the region of the heart to observe its beating; in doing so his hand came in contact with the iron rods.

"What is this hard substance in her stays?" he asked.

The child turned red, and answered—"It is nothing."

I made him a sign to proceed in his examination. When he had loosened the band of black

serge, and exposed the stays, he started to his feet.

"It is iron! what infamous wretch has done this?"

My servant answered—"Chiarina."

"Call this woman."

Chiarina, trembling, entreated me to calm him. I showed him the child's distress; then turning to the portress, and others of the nuns who were present,

"Murders," he said, "are committed not with daggers and poison only—it is equally murder to have put those stays on that girl: in compressing her heart you kill her."

These words were thrown to the winds. Chiarina was still made to wear the iron rods. I wrote to her brother to say that leaving his sister in the convent was but dooming her to death. He came at once to Naples, and Chiarina made preparations to leave. She was grieved to part from me. I assured her that I myself would not remain longer in the convent—thinking that my request to Rome would meet with no obstacle.

She left, and the younger nuns offered candles to the Virgin, as a thanksgiving for her departure.

The poor child had no other fault than that of being my friend.

It was winter: the cold of the Abruzzi, whither her brother was obliged to return, was highly pre-

judicial to her health; and, as time makes us forget in some measure past sufferings, she thought she should still be better in the convent than travelling about with her brother. In a few months she returned to Naples, and asked to re-enter. I pointed out the indiscretion of this. I reminded her of her sufferings, and counselled her to choose in preference some asylum where she could live independently, and have the servant of her choice. She replied—

"I wish to be with you."

"But I am going to leave San Aregone Armeno."

"You say so, but who knows if you will be allowed. Months have already passed since you said you were prepared to go."

On the day appointed for the Chapter to give their votes for her re-admission, I determined to put my conscience at rest; and, in the act of giving mine, I raised my hand to let all see that I deposited a black ball in the box. The Chapter carried her admission by the votes of the elder nuns alone; the younger had unanimously negatived it. She re-entered, and soon repented of the step she had taken. She told me, that in order to hide her cough she was obliged to endure almost suffocation by placing her head beneath her pillow. One morning the woman went to waken her; she called, and received no answer; she shook her, there was no movement. She was dead!

CHAPTER XVII.

CARDINAL RIARIO.

Six months after the death of Caracciolo, his predecessor, and after the vicariat of Savarese, Cardinal Riario Sforza was raised to the archiepiscopal see of Naples. Too young for the position, of limited acquirements, and altogether deficient in prudence and experience, he had obtained this post through the influence of his uncle, who in that golden age of Papacy directed Pope Gregory XVI.'s will according to his own.

In order to give him the thinnest possible varnish of episcopal responsibilities and duties of which he was altogether innocent—they had kept him for the six previous months in the bishopric of Aveola. Shortly after Pope Gregory had presented the precious gift to the capital of Ferdinand II., who cordially thanked him for it, he died. Mastai Ferretti succeeded him in the Holy See.

All know what consummate hopes Pius IX. gave on his first coming to the Pontificate. He was not liberal in reality, but, after the example of Aristides the Just, he wished to be thought so. The dreams of the Pygmalions of Italy hitherto placid were now disturbed by terrible phantoms; its afflicted populations were opening their hearts to legitimate aspirations, and already a council was spoken of to decree the absolving of monastic vows, vows which three centuries earlier the Trent Council had defined. In this interval my petition for leave to quit the convent had been despatched to Rome.

Cardinal Riario, desirous on the outset of his government to appear as a zealous prelate, had paid frequent visits to our convent; and it was always after having held a lengthened interview with the Abbess, and another nun, an eminent dissembler, and who might in reality have been styled the Superior, for nothing was done without her assent, that the whole sisterhood was summoned to pay their respects to him.

I had always made my entrance together with the others, but had kept in the background—allowing those to take the foremost places who liked to court attention, or who wished to address some compliment to him.

Intrenched within my reserve, I had ample opportunity to observe that he was deficient in a most

important point—education. It was easy to see that the time he had passed for the great object in Rome had been spent in anything rather than study. He had learned in Rome the pasquinade to imitate the Romans in their sarcasm only, but he lacked their acuteness and ready wit which seize the occasion so happily—for a "mauvais plaisant," there is little difference between Marforio and "Pulcinella."

Affecting a solemn demeanour which sat ill on him, he would sometimes attempt to utter an allocution or admonition: it was extremely difficult to seize what he intended to imply by his diffuse quid pro quo, ideas inaptly appended together, terms and forms of speech altogether mal-à-propos, obscure and confused constructions. Although inexpert in speaking, and still more in writing his native tongue, yet he was bitten with the vanity of passing for a Latinist, and would make his discourse a farrago of Latin proverbs and biblical phraseology. I fear, indeed, that he had retained but little of his Limen Grammaticum learned in the Holy City, if I may except his aptness in conjugating the present and the future of a single verb in it, the verb "to love." This too is the opinion of two-thirds of Roman society.

Riario at that period passed for a handsome man—de gustibus, &c. It was undoubted that at each of his visits he would send the younger Benedictines into

fits of ecstatic admiration of him. When he had left the parlour they would assemble in fluttering and excited groups, descanting on and summing up all his endowments material and spiritual, one trying to outrun the other in her panegyrics on these. "Is he not handsome?" one would exclaim; "what a fascinating expression! what a model of a hand!" Another would interpose, "What learning! a mouth distilling honey!" I said to myself, he has only learned to pose himself with effect. In fine nothing was thought of in the convent for many days and nights after these visits but the sweet savour of his words; and those to whom these odorous bouquets were particularly presented would redden, tremulous with emotion and pleasure.

I had never spoken to him, nor courted his observation. I had felt one of those insuperable antipathies to him, which are not easily explained.

Desirous, on one occasion, of exhibiting his politeness, he sent the sisterhood a large basket of strawberries. The nuns presented his postman with a piastre, and were profuse in their eulogiums of the new Head, as they styled him. This delicate attention, however, transpired by some means, and coming to the ears of some wag, he determined on adding a farce to the comedy.

A few days later a second present arrived. A porter, accompanied by a servant bending under the

weight of an enormous fish covered with orange boughs, arrived at the convent. In presenting this enormous mass which they called a sturgeon, the servant poured forth, in the name of his Eminence, an interminable torrent of compliments. As on the previous occasion the servant received his piastre, the porter two carlini. The nuns crowded in the Porteria were in ecstasies, and those who more especially appropriated the compliment to themselves were loud in their proposal to fee the liveried messenger still more liberally. At this juncture the house steward (account keeper) arrived.

"Do you know, Don Giuseppe, that his Eminence has sent us another present? You must write another letter of compliments and thanks in the name of the Communita."

"Indeed!" cried the steward in ecstasy; "and what has he sent—a fish?—and such a fish! there will be enough for the servants too!"

"And some left after that!" was cried in chorus.

The leviathan was dragged near the door, and the steward put on his spectacles; he viewed it from head to tail, made them turn it and return it, and then fell into meditation upon all he knew of icthyology; then he spoke:

"Do you know, my Lady Abbess, and your Reverences, that this strikes me to be a fish for a museum —a fish you won't like the eating of."

"How so! how so! Don Giuseppe, my good man, you are dreaming."

"Well! let some sailor see it."

Whilst the sisters stood around gaping and exclaiming "Gesù! Gesù!" a fisherman from the neighbouring Piazza del Purgatorio arrived, and had no sooner cast his eyes on the present than he cried—

"It's a porpoise! throw it out."

"I told you it was a museum monster," echoed Don Giuseppe.

It is impossible to picture the mortification and rage of the nuns. The joke came to the Cardinal's ears, who then saw that gallantry was a little more expensive in Naples than in Rome, and he abstained from any further public demonstration of his partiality for the sisters.

On a subsequent occasion, in paying his visit to San Gregorio, and remaining as usual closeted with the Abbess and her shadow, the other nun, whilst the sisters were waiting with the usual impatience to be summoned, my signal was given on the bell. I descended to the portress's room, where I found the Abbess who at that moment had quitted the parlour.

"The Cardinal wishes to speak with you," she said.

My heart gave a bound. My thoughts at once recurred to the petition which I had sent to Rome two months previously.

The Cardinal was alone, reclining on an arm-chair.

At the first glance I perceived that he was "got up" with much care and attention, and a delicate perfume of eau de Cologne diffused itself from his person throughout the circumambient atmosphere.

I knelt, as is the practice, or rather malpractice, before the purple. Raising his hand, he gave me his blessing; and then looking long and fixedly at me, spoke in gentle and mellifluous accents—

"You have preferred a request to the Holy See for permission to quit the cloister?"

"Yes, your Eminence," I answered in a tremor as much of hope as fear.

"And for what reason?"

"Motives of health."

An ironical smile passed across his features; he regarded me attentively, and then added—

"You do not look like a person in bad health."

"Yet, God knows I am so."

"What do you suffer from?"

"From nervous attacks — from convulsions," I replied.

"Who is there that does not suffer from nervous attacks?—all women have convulsions! Hysterics! hysterics! nothing more. You nuns are still more subject to them than seculars."

After a brief silence I resumed—"My request was accompanied by a medical certificate."

"I have no trust in medical men—they are all more or less impostors."

"It was given on oath," I rejoined.

"Doctors make oaths in such cases without much difficulty—they are all infidels, all perjurers."

I was silent. After another pause he resumed—

"Your petition has been remitted to me from the Holy See, for all petitions sent from my diocese are returned to the Ordinary to verify the motives of the petititioner, and to receive his assent. It is therefore in my possession. Now, to prevent you from entertaining any vain hopes, I must inform you that I withhold my assent."

I was thunderstruck! Observing my excessive perturbation, he desired me to be seated, and softening the tone of his voice, which had assumed a hard accent in the concluding phrases—

"I have just now," said he, "had some conversation with the Superior, and she informs me that your motive for desiring to get out is not bad health, but the affair of the Chierici."

I now saw fully through the part the Cardinal had taken in that matter. At this reminiscence of it raised by himself the blood flew to my face, and I fixed on him an eye of indignation.

"Your Eminence," I cried, making a supreme effort to suppress the agitation which had seized me, "your

Eminence should be above such low and ignominious intrigues" ——

"Don't agitate yourself," he replied, interrupting me. "I do not attach any importance to that stupid affair, because I understood that nothing positive passed between you and him, Would a noble—I mean a nun like you—level herself with a simple chierico? However, put it altogether out of your head—the idea of obtaining permission to quit the convent—it is absurd."

Cold as a piece of marble, I fearlessly replied to him that I did not believe that God and the Holy Father and his Eminence could by common consent decree my death by the prolongation of my imprisonment.

Interrupting me, he changed the conversation, and detained me long on irrelevant and trivial subjects; then suddenly rising—

"I will come more frequently to see you," added he: "put yourself more forward, and give me the satisfaction of knowing that you have entirely dismissed from your mind the temptation of a return to the evil of the age. Do you understand now? Capissi j'à!"

I returned to my cell and gave myself up to despair, which was only increased by the sarcastic titterings of the nuns. I shunned them all. As soon as I had fulfilled my duties as Infermiera and those in

the choir, I retired by the shortest way I could find to my room, where I read, or worked, or meditated in tears; and where, more to form a distraction, than from any desire to publish them, I first commenced scribbling these memoirs. Maria Giuseppe, my faithful attendant, the sole companion of my solitude, never left my side but for urgent services; and, less experienced than I was in priestly malignity and dissimulation, sought ever to give me comfort through the wildest and most chimerical hopes. I could only make response with a deep sigh in the Dantesque apostrophe of Asti's poet—

". . . . Stripe malnata e cruda
Che degle altrui perigli all'ombra ride."

My mother was equally inconsolable; the more so as she learned from me that other nuns who suffered much less in health than I did, obtained that which was denied to me. The Canon tried in vain to appease me, I gave myself up to the most unbounded despair.

I made another and more energetic instance, and despatched it to Rome.

Faithful to his promise, Riario came more frequently to the convent. Every time the bell summoned the sisterhood to the parlour, I felt a shudder. To avoid that unpalatable encounter, what would I not have given! But what was to be done? Hardly had he made his appearance, when he would ask, "And your Caracciolo, where is she?"

I was obliged to come forward and listen to his inquiries for my health and tranquillity of mind, made in his most honied tones—the flatteries of the executioner to the condemned man.

"Poor thing! she is so good, we never see her, we never hear her;" put in the hypocritical Abbess, who was always fair-spoken of me to my face. "Your Eminence, I must make a complaint of our Henrietta; she becomes more and more misanthropic every day; she shuns our society, and shuts herself up in her room, even during the hours of recreation she does not join the others."

"Leave her alone a moment with me," said the Archbishop, in a tone of patriarchal command.

The nuns left the room with airs of discontent, and muttering—"I suppose we shall hear of nothing now but la Caracciolo!" I sat down at some distance, curious enough to see how his Eminence would begin the conversation.

He assumed an affable attitude, and passing his handkerchief across his brow, asked me—

"Why are you thus always alone and pensive?"

"Is this, too, a crime? When I fulfil my duties, and obey all injunctions, cannot I dispose of the rest my time myself?

"Nevertheless I should like to take a peep through the partition at what you are doing for so many hours

alone in your room. The confessor is not entrusted with all of it."

"I read, I scribble, I work—perhaps these are infractions?"

"Certainly; you are not permitted to read or write anything but devotional works. Pray what do you then read and write?"

"Some instructive book to console me in the oppression which brutifies me. I sketch the memoirs of my captivity to leave a remembrance of it, if I can."

"Oppression! Memoirs! Captivity! Heydey! Where in the world have you got that Carbonaro vocabulary? Do you know that I ought to punish you severely for such unreasonable fancies?"

"You can do that too! All that is wanting to me now is the chain to my foot. Order it."

"The interest I feel in you would prevent my doing this. Nevertheless I would like to make you relinquish the preposterous idea of recovering liberty; upon this topic I am absolute—implacable, inexorable. I will never accede to it."

"You try in vain to deprive me of my last gleam of hope. I have again written to the Holy See."

"I know it, I know it; and I shall always negative it. But tell me, if you did get out, where would you go?"

"To my mother's house. I believe there is no one

who can guard a daughter better than her own mother." As I uttered these words the tears welled up in my eyes, for the remembrance of my father shot into my mind. The Cardinal uttered a laugh which would have done credit to Mephistophiles.

"Fiddle-faddle! you wish to get out to dance. Your mother gives balls to the liberals; but let her look well to what she is doing, or the police will look to her."

This last inuendo exhausted all my remaining patience. Seizing a fold of my scapulary, "With this abhorred-by-all garment," I exclaimed, "I should be ashamed to show myself, much more to take part in a ball. I seek my liberation to repossess an inestimable boon, which I had renounced through inexperience, through weakness, perhaps through an adverse fate."

"I cannot permit you to get out. I repeat it. So think no longer of it," returned the Cardinal, in a determined tone. "At present I am about to set out for Rome, to remain there a few days; on my return I will come and see you."

"And I on my side will never relinquish my efforts for my freedom." When he had turned his back I superadded, "May I never see your face again."

Nevertheless my dejection only increased from day to day—my intellects began to suffer. I measured the mental torments of the two insane servants by

my own, and pictured myself reduced to the same condition. The hopes which I had reposed in the liberal sentiments of Pius IX. were melting into thin air (more than a year had elapsed since my request was first made). At first they spoke of absolving from vows, then a quinquennial renewal of them; finally it was confined to the renewal of those only which had been professed after the issue of the Brief—in the end the subject was dropped altogether. In the mind of Pius IX. monastic emancipation and patriotism underwent the same fate.

"E quendo Roma non volto mantello?"

My first intention, as I have already said, was to go out for six months, and had I not been refused, this perhaps would have contented me with the choice of passing into another convent. The capricious refusal—the arbitrary denial to me of that which was granted every day to so many others whom the air of Naples (more especially in the summer months) was unsalutary, irritated me to the quick. It was evidently a personal affront, which rather than submit to I would have renounced my own existence.

From that hour, then, I bade adieu to every palliative, every half-way means, and aimed directly at the final absolving of my vows. I got together every information on this subject within my power. I

procured books which treated of the matter, and had a consultation with a doctor of canon law. I learned that my first step must be to petition before the fifth year (from the date of my profession) had expired, to show sufficient cause for the annulling of my vows—to prove that moral violence had been exercised in the act of professing; in fine, that the case would be first heard at the ecclesiastical court of Naples, afterwards in that of Rome, requiring much delay and much money, with a faint probability of success.

I was not a little disconcerted at the contemplation of this mesh of difficulties. The fifth anniversary of my profession was close at hand—then would the courts of Naples run counter to the depositions of a Cardinal-Archbishop in order to show justice to the reclamations of a nun without patronage! Then, again, where was I to procure the money required to despatch an advocate to Rome, and that inevitably required to oil the palms of their reverences in that capital. This melancholy prospective bewildered me, I say. Nevertheless, not to lose the right of petitioning before the expiration of the term, I drew up another memorial, which I addressed to the Court of Naples, bringing to light every circumstance which did violence to my will from the first day of my entrance to that on which I took the vows.

What was the fate of this memorial? Was it inter-

cepted in the courts, which never allowed it to transpire, or did it fall into the fangs of the Cardinal? This mystery was never cleared up to me—it was not even returned to me, but disappeared without a trace.

Seeing the maze of difficulties to which I ran the risk of being exposed, I determined to write directly to the Holy Father himself; to open my heart to him as a daughter, to move him to compassionate my desperate condition. In writing to a man of the world as Pius IX. was said to be, I did not treat of my bodily health only, which was getting worse every day; but I told him besides of matters not less important: that having had from my youth an inclination for matrimony, I should marry if he would absolve me from my obligations to the opposite state—a state I had assumed against my will, and which had dragged me into a current of disastrous and fatal circumstances. To make sure of inviolability of my secret, I commenced my address with the word 'Confiteor,' a form adopted in auricular confession.

The Cardinal, who in the mean time had returned from Rome, had paid his visit to the convent, and once more was desirous of a tête-à-tête with me. He prefaced his colloquy by presenting me with a rosary imported by him from the Holy City and blessed there, asking in exchange some little piece of my

work. The present seemed to me one of evil augury. More desirous of my freedom than covetous of such toys of saintliness, I answered his Eminence somewhat drily that I knew nothing of woman's work.

"That is not the case," he said, insinuatingly; "your work is not unknown to me. Apply yourself to something—a piece of embroidery for instance—it will serve as a distraction."

The Abbess entered at this moment, and being apprised by the Cardinal of my refusal, contorted her face into an expression of indignation.

"The work shall be done without fail," said she, in an imperious tone to the Cardinal, "I will see that she begins and finishes it myself."

For many days she worried me, reiterating her question, if I had commenced it, and what it was to be.

Irritated at length by her incessant worry, I said to her—

"Do you wish to impose it on me as discipline?"

"Not at all! I hope you will do it with good will."

"Then pray have done with it altogether. I detest that man as much as a State prisoner abhors the author of his imprisonment. Is it not he who detains me in this state of violence?"

"But he does it because he is fond of you—"

"Fond of me! Much thanks! Would to God

he hated me, instead of bestowing his friendship on me!"

"Now, however," rejoined the Abbess, with an affected air, "you must be more tranquillised, the young nuns annoy you no longer."

"I can perceive that," I answered; "they are afraid I should get out and pay them back in the coin they deserve."

The Superior bit her lip—I learned afterwards that the subject of my petition was considered in light of a political crime, and, enrolled amongst state affairs, occupied the authority more than I imagined; and that between Riario, the Abbess, and the Confessor, there reigned upon that subject an understanding not less secret than complete.

Hearing that I had been transferred from the duty of Infermiera to that of superintendent of the bread, the Cardinal solicited some confectionery, provided it was made by my hand. He received the same negative reply.

Having come one day to the convent upon some business, after it was despatched, he requested the Sisters to conduct him to my room. Examining everything in it, even minutely, he then went out upon the terrace, and seeing Vesuvius, with the adjacent hills in front of him, and the enchanting country round about, began in loud praises of it.

"What a charming view your room commands—

what an immense horizon — this view raises the heart and edifies the soul—and can you leave it?"

"This prospect," I answered, "only makes the prisoner sigh the more for the boon of liberty."

"But you have liberty enough, who will say that a larger dose of it would not turn to your disadvantage?"

With similar speeches the afflicted population of Agrigentum, too, were comforted by their tyrant. I replied to his Eminence, accompanying the irony with a smile.

He understood me, and remained silent—then took his leave. That was the age of Monsignori Apuzzo, of Pietrocola, of Del Caretto—the age, when by dint of sophistry, a doctrine was raised to the dignity of an axiom — "That the peoples of the two Sicilies, too happy in the state of innocence in which they lived, should not run the risk of being defrauded of it by seeking to carry their literary acquirements beyond the alphabet." In what portion of the Christian world does not the ignominy of Monsignore Apuzzo's 'Catechisms' resound? Could clerical obscurity and Bourbon despotism leave behind them a monument of greater infamy than this. About six weeks after I had despatched my letter to the Holy Father, the confessor came one morning much dejected and in bad humour. He had just come from the Archbishop's palace. Strange! the letter

written in confession to the Pope, and kept secret from the Confessor himself, had been in the first instance handed to the Cardinal.

The sanctity of a sealed letter violated—and the seal of Confession broken. His Eminence wished to know from the Canon the how, and when, and why he had permitted that writing to be addressed to his Holiness, and asked, moreover, if any stormy passion had suggested such an expedient.

The Canon asserted that he knew nothing of it—at least so he said: they are all of one kidney. It was certain that in the Confessional I had made it a law to myself, to reveal nothing but the merest infractions of discipline.

The Cardinal was in great wrath at what it pleased him to qualify in me and call my irrepressible conspiracy, and allowed a long time to elapse before he returned to see me. That letter of mine which had fallen into his hands had broken the last thread of hope which I entertained of quitting the convent; only, in place of those illusions which, one after the other, vanished at their birth, there had begun to arise a different and clearer light of salvation for me. The genius of Italian liberty had begun to scatter the dust of the tomb from his locks, and to resume his ancient way fairer and stronger than ever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1848.

SINCE the last months of the year 1847, the horizon of Italy had assumed a threatening aspect which presaged a crisis both imminent and inevitable.

The populations of our peninsula found themselves involved in a state of expectancy which differed little from that of the Millenarian—each day as it passed seemed an age—with the evening came despondency; every sun as it rose gave life to renewed hopes. Though shut out from the world, I received information of all that was going on through my relatives, and the slightest symptoms of change. The smallest popular movement made my heart bound.

The convents of Naples have been for all time, and are still, the most uncompromising champions of despotism. By the order of Superiors and the motu proprio of the nuns themselves prayers were offered up in San Gregorio for the reigning monarch, in

which, amongst other things, the Almighty was implored to exterminate the evil doers, in other words—the liberals. With what a profound sense of disapproval was I constrained to take part in these. Against such prayers my heart protested with all its energy—instead, I offered up silent vows to the Omnipotent for the downfall of tyranny, and the triumph of the nation to which it was my boast to belong.

My changed demeanour did not escape the observation of the nuns; then the cry went forth that I was a revolutionary, associated with evil societies, a sectarian, heretic, and what not, and that the convent was in the utmost danger on my account. I paid no attention to their lamentations, whilst I deplored the brute ignorance in which they lived. Nay, from the day on which Ferdinand II. swore to grant a constitution, and the liberty of the press was proclaimed. I openly purchased the liberal papers, and read them aloud in the convent halls, so many ages deaf to the accents of liberty. I experienced a state of rapture at the clamorous uprising of the people, the terrific roar of revolution, the noise of barricades, the falling of thrones, which so contrasted with the sepulchral silence of my prison. What ecstasy! I repeated to myself, if these misanthropic vaults would echo with the blast of a trumpet which might be heard in the Capitol itself!

In the mean time my enthusiasm, fed daily on the news, increased in proportion as I saw the priests foaming with rage and fanaticism.

The faces of these negromants served me as a telegraph. Did a jaundiced hue overspread their contracted features, I was sure that the ship was sailing well. Did they begin to raise their downcast looks to sneer, to explode in imprecations against the constitution which they called prostitution, I knew the wind was against us. By degrees a conspiracy was formed in the convent, with the object of mortifying my liberalism, and making a butt of my convictions. It was at the moment when those high-souled Neapolitan ladies set out for Lombardy to co-operate (it was said) in the expulsion of the Austrian. What a storm of sarcasms, of empoisoned quips, of pungent sneers, of irony, assailed me then as I sat at meals in the refectory. Often have I left the table at the soup, and betaken myself to my room, furious, and tempted to set fire to the convent, and send all those wasps and hornets, together with myself, into smoke and ashes.

One day, during one of those senseless alarms which, without any motive, too frequently occurred in the streets of Naples, I and two other nuns ascended to the belfry to see what was occurring. The populace was flying in every direction; three young men only were walking quietly on; they per-

ceived us through the grating, and one of them cried, "Cheer up, my little nuns, your woes will soon be over."

My satisfaction was only too apparent. One of the nuns observing it—

"You laugh," she cried; "it may be matter for crying."

"Cry you who lose at it," I answered: "I who win will laugh."

The Abbess, who learned what we had done, ordered the belfry to be locked—there remained, however, other loopholes in the convent from whence I could espy and discovered what was going on in the world outside. I knew already that the constitution as it was granted by the king promised no reform in matters of religion. He, a dotard and sanctimonious, pig-headed, and a hypocrite, had neither granted liberty of worship nor anything from which I could draw a hope to see monasteries—those lowest pits of hell, the opprobrium of our age—suppressed. The cry, "Viva Pio Nono" alone, which often reached my ear, was still an anchor of hope for me. Could a pope who, on the outset of his reign, had declared himself before the whole world the exalted friend of liberty—could he, I repeat, sustain himself in the admiration of the Christian world without yielding some reform in the matter of ecclesiastical discipline—a reform as

much required for the wants of the age as it would be suggested by his own convictions.

Encouraged by such reflections, I addressed another memorial to be consigned to the hands of the Pontiff himself. Laying aside the love of supplication I had hitherto employed, I used on this occasion language of a more vigorous expression, and such as was suitable to the times.

I said plainly that the monastic state was nothing but a remnant of Oriental barbarism—the convent nothing but a prison for those who had entered it unwillingly; that conscious of not having committed any crime against God or my neighbour I did not know by what law, human or divine, I should be left to languish, and finally to die in despair in a prison. That I hoped to find favour in the mercy of a prince who had given such promise to Italy, and to Christianity a new era of reform I concluded by declaring that if the justice I solicited was persistently denied me, I would (fearless of all consequences) have recourse to the free press, and declare to the whole world the enormity of my sacrifice.

The Pope was not averse to my leaving the convent; the sacred college of bishops and regulars who had the jurisdiction in these matters, were continually granting leave to the Sisters to go out, when a medical man deposed to the necessity of it. The court of Rome, therefore, had no motive for refusing

me in particular my request; the obstacle was in Naples, because formality required the vote of the Ordinary to support the petition. The Cardinal, for private reasons of his own, persisted in refusing, and two years and a half had now elapsed, during which I had been suffering from his arbitrary act.

The 15th of May had arrived—a day of terrible reaction, and which we Neapolitans shall ever remember with horror.

The Abbess had caused the usual hour of divine service to be anticipated, that we might ascend to the Belvedere to see the King on his progress to the church of San Lorenzo, which was in close proximity to the convent—it being the day appointed for the opening of Parliament. I had seen the King in the previous month of January, and as he passed on horseback on his way to the Quartiere del Mercato, at the moment of his arrival beneath the belfry, take off the tricolour cockade which he wore at his breast, and conceal it in his pocket, that he should not let the populace of that teeming quarter see the symbol of the liberty he had promised. This act, which may have escaped the observation of the greater number, seemed to me to augur badly.

At ten o'clock, the portress came out of breath to inform us that the entire Toledo was barricaded, and that it was absolutely necessary that the convent gates should be shut at once. I betook myself at

once to my accustomed station at the little window, to observe the National Guard (a picket of which was posted at San Lorenzo), and remarked an unusual stir there. The report of the first cannon warned us that the affair was more serious than we had imagined. This humane (?) religious (?) and Constitutional (?) King, bestowed on his capital the shells of the forts and the balls of his soldiers' musketry.

A number of young men of the higher class erected, in connexion with the populace, two barricades, one below the belfry, another at the corner of the lane "Cinque Santi." For many hours the cannon and the musketry never for a moment ceased ejecting their deadly missiles on unfortunate Naples.

I began to distinguish some cries of "Long live the King!"

The sisters were in high glee—even to the clapping of hands. I, in equal tribulation. There was no longer any doubt—the fate of Naples hung on the favour of despotism—the National Guard attempted flight in various disguises—all was in confusion. The populace, which in the morning had gone hand in hand with the Liberals in constructing the barricades and shouting "Long live the Nation," in the same evening, prostrated themselves before the cavalry—shouting, "Long live the King!"

I flew to my room, and committed my memoirs to the flames, along with other papers, which might have compromised any of my relatives.

The magnificent Gravina Palace, which had been fired by the Swiss mercenaries, threw its sinister light even to our convent, and on the morrow a white flag floated on the smoking ruins in sign of jubilee and conquest. It is known how the city was placed in a state of siege; but an order from the police commanded that a white flag should appear at every balcony and window. The "berghinelle" of the market, and of another neighbouring quarter known for their vicious lives, betook themselves, dressed in white, wreathed with flowers, and drunk, to the piazza of the palace to congratulate the despot on his victory and join in the bacchanals of the soldiery they fell in with.

My position was not exempt from all danger. Many things transpired to assure me that my name also was inscribed on the black books of the police. Denouncers and false witnesses were not wanting amongst so many members of the community.

In this state of things, God stretched forth His hand to me.

A Capucin monk, of venerable mien and long and hoary beard, summoned me to the parlour. He came from Rome charged to consign to me a Brief of Permission to get out, and at the same time to exhort me

to patience to bear my state, in the choice of which my will had not been consulted. This Brief was not precisely that which I had hoped for. The Holy See wished to sacrifice justice in great measure to appearances. Not to give offence to the Archbishop of Naples, who had always energetically opposed my instances, quoting the specious pretext that my mother was in the practice of receiving persons suspected of liberalism and atheism, the Brief, so to say, held its foot in both stirrups—satisfying me on the one side with a partial leave, and appeased the Cardinal by making it imperative that I should enter a "Conservatorio" of my own selection, and not the maternal house; it being understood that I could absent myself during the day, provided I returned every evening. This time the order was formal, and the Cardinal could not interfere with his veto.

Though this was but a half measure, yet I saw that it would be but folly to refuse. It was still a step in advance towards allowing one day the perfect liberty I panted for, nor was I ignorant of the proverb which says, "by spreading the dough, the bread is made finer."

This Brief arrived most opportunely. Seeing that a messenger had been despatched directly from the Holy Father himself, made it seem that I was under more saintly protection than I was in reality, and

those were silenced who would otherwise have readily been my accusers.

I made a copy of the Brief, and sent it to the Cardinal. He consulted with several Canons to see if he could possibly still throw some impediment in the way of my getting out; but the order was explicit and admitted of no cavil.

Shortly after this he arrived. I never saw him carry his head so high—a true signal in a Jesuit of defeat. After having complained at considerable length of my mother's violent hostilities with him, he said to me—

"You will persist in going out?"

"I wish to go out—and I will get out."

"In that case," he rejoined, "you must take the trouble to find some Conservatorio yourself" . . . .

"Do not let this concern your Eminence," I said, cutting short his sentence; "this concerns myself exclusively."

And in truth the choice of a Conservatorio did not at first sight appear to me to be a matter requiring great consideration. But who would have imagined that at the moment of putting my foot beyond the threshold of my purgatory, a noosed cord, new and unsuspected, stood ready to entangle it—laid there by the black-gowned camorra?

I had to endure the most impertinent and humiliating repulses. As soon as each of these receptacles

received my request, they would send to make inquiries. Where? To San Gregorio Armeno. Pilate referring to Caiaphas.

"May we ask, if you please, the real motive for which Sister Henrietta wishes to be transferred from your Convent to a Conservatorio?"

"Ah! who knows, my daughter! there are so many things said of her—but there are bad tongues everywhere."

"True! true! they say, she is a lost one."

"Not at all—quite the reverse. She is full of fine qualities—good, docile, generous, an excellent friend, &c., &c. Still, there are persons who say serious things of her—but, as I say, there are bad tongues everywhere."

"And what is this they say?"

"They say she reads prohibited books—that she furnishes the papers of the wicked ones with villanous matter—that she writes poetry and is concocting a scheme of ecclesiastical reform, the first effect of which is to be the abolition of convents and monastic orders, that—that—that—"

Here the good woman appended a string of formidable accusations to me—then on her own jurisdiction condemned me to final punishment—attached a running noose round my neck—but seeing me swinging between the sky and the ground, she would exclaim in a charitable tone—

"For all that she is so good!"

At sight of such a repulsive portrait, who would have received the original under their roof.

I made application to retreats even of the lowest class. I found all their doors closed.

Seeing through these machinations, I addressed a letter to the Cardinal, saying, that if he had not sufficient authority to cause the orders of the Holy See to be carried into effect, I would write to Rome and make another reclamation.

The Cardinal went forthwith to the Conservatorio di Costantinopoli, and ordered that I was to be received there without any delay. At first the Sisters alleged that they had no room at their disposal. The Cardinal replied—

"This is only a pretext—should it be the case, however, one of yourselves must give up her room to the Signora Caracciolo."

In an instant there were a dozen rooms at my disposal. I was obliged to pay down forty ducats entrance-money. My servant Maria Giuseppa, overjoyed to accompany me, made our preparations for departure with great jubilee.

The nuns of San Gregorio Armeno, not having it in their power to manifest their ill-will to me any further, caused the Cardinal to prohibit me from taking with me the plate and valuables which according to the custom in that communité I had inherited from my aunts.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "CONSERVATORIO DI COSTANTINOPOLI."

On the morning of the 28th of January, 1849, two carriages stopped before the door of the convent; in one was my mother, in the second sat the Vicar. I found myself softened in no slight degree as I pressed the hands of the few nuns who felt for me—these were almost all amongst the elder ones—women of simple piety; and when I entreated their indulgence for any annoyance I might involuntarily have caused them, they were touched even to tears. I would have taken leave too of those who had waged war against me, but they had all betaken themselves to some hiding-place.

After nine years of cruel suffering, I passed that threshold once more, which I thought never to have crossed again.

"Be quick!" cried my mother, somewhat impatiently, "how long you keep us waiting!"

This she said to me, who had made me wait for her will—nine long years!

The carriage drove off—when a few yards from the door, I turned round to look upon the lofty and naked walls of the convent, the belfry, the stairs and pillars of the church. The iron gate recalled to me the memory of the day when its creaking hinges had separated me from the dearest objects of my life, and in sadness I murmured to myself the celebrated stanza—

> "E come quei chi con lena appanata
> Uscito fuori del pelago alla riva.
> Si Volge all' acqua perigliosa e guata,
> Cosi l'animo mio ch' ancor fuggiva
> Si volse indietro a rimirar lo passo
> Che non lascio giammai persona viva."

The sisters of the new convent awaited the party at the door. When the compliments to the Vicar were over, and my mother had taken her leave, I was shown into the dining-room of the Abbess, there being no common refectory. Here I dined with the Superior and three other nuns, after which I was conducted to the second story, to the room assigned to me near the church.

The city of Naples, devastated in 1526 by a terrible pestilence which cut off 60,000 souls, erected a small chapel to the Mother of God. When, therefore, in 1575, the scourge again spread itself over the whole

of Italy without reaching us, the grateful commune changed the modest chapel to a temple, to which later, in 1603, was added a conservatorio—a handsome, extensive, and commodious building, placed in one of the most cheerful quarters of the city. I found there few occupants—fourteen oblates, some twenty scholars, and four lay sisters; the oblates wore the dress of the Immaculate Conception. The scholars, besides feminine works, occupied themselves, in some slight degree, with letters.

Having been for so long unaccustomed to the ebb and flow of the great thoroughfares, to that clamorous uproar of voices, to that deafening sound of wheels, altogether characteristic of Naples, I thought at first that I had ascended, by some miracle, from the realm of shadows to the living world. My sight seemed clearer, my lungs more expanded, my mind more calmed. I no longer saw before me that enormous wall of the cloister, which for nine years had weighed upon my chest like an incubus, and confined my respiration. I heard the people, the carriages, the sellers, the troops pass. I could not, indeed, look out of the windows, they were raised too high; but finding myself in one of the most beautiful positions of the city, I could imagine myself lodged rather in a private house than in a monastery. All, in fine, appeared to me new, all something singular and strange—the air, the sound, the light, the

movement, even to the semblance of my fellow beings. My own person seemed to me an exotic plant transplanted from a distant land; it appeared, in some strange way, an object of curiosity to me. I do not fear to be considered as exaggerating, if, to depict that singular illusion, I confess to have applied to the mirror to confirm me in my own personal identity.

The Brief permitted me to go out every morning, but the Cardinal, who had been jestingly entitled my "Sir Hudson Lowe," prohibited me from going out on foot.

I have said that all appeared more humanized. The air of San Gregorio breathed the damps of the dead chamber—an atmosphere loaded with mephitic miasma, which, penetrating everywhere, infiltrated into the system more or less acrimony, asperity, and ill-temper. Restored to a free, healthy, well-ventilated atmosphere, to the affectionate intercourse of relations, to the sweet communion of the senses, of the emotions of patriotism; restored, in a word, to the embrace of humanity, I at once experienced the beneficial results. By little and little my reason disentangled itself from the dark mist which enveloped it. The heart which had taken refuge in its innermost lair — which had withered in barren struggles and grown strong in its isolation—returned gradually to intoxicate itself in concerts of that divine

harmony, the love of one's kind. Then alone did I begin to see clearly in what consisted the Christian religion, the faith which, up to that moment, had acted on my will with despotic command, that faith which I had seen debased in practices of imbecile piety, vituperative in its hatred of all that did not bear the hieratic impress. I felt it then flow into me in full streams, in the free exercise of the faculties of the soul, in the workings of thought and sentiment, in the participation of the sufferings of others. What shall I say more? the very notes which the organ, at the moment of the consecration or elevation, gave forth, suffused me with an ineffable sweetness, softened and humanized me.

Better still would have been my new state, were it not for two things which brought me serious annoyance. The curiosity which my new dress excited caused the public to examine me as they would an animal in a menagerie; and also that in the Conservatorio a choral nun did not act as portress, but instead a ferocious lay sister, little short of anthropophagous. One could really picture this woman in a menagerie, her appearance being partly human, partly that of a Siberian bear: a forehead not more than two fingers in breadth, eyebrows perpetually knitted, minute and blodshot eyes, a flattened nose, a mouth armed with formidable tusks which projected beyond the lips, and growling voice. When

she looked, her look was a threat; when she spoke, it was to bite.

The gate was shut at sunset. To be five minutes too late put her in a great rage; she would grind her teeth, roll her eyes, and mutter some such sentence as,—"Small thanks to the Cardinal for the present he has made the Conservatorio! A nun who must go out every day!"

Towards the end of the following October, the Cardinal sent an order to the Abbess to prohibit my going out at all in future. I was once more reduced to my primary state of reclusion.

"Nuovi tormenti, nuove tormentata."

In answer to my remonstrance the Cardinal came to me and said that it was quite out of rule that a nun should drive up the Corso in a carriage; nor was it fitting that the oblates of the Conservatorio should be scandalized by my going out.

"What would be the condition of our holy religion, and especially that of the monastic orders, if all nuns, as you do, felt the necessity of a walk in public?"

Irritated at such want of humanity, and feeling shame in submitting to a proud priest, the arbitrator of my liberty, I determined to do everything in order to shake off the ignoble yoke. For this purpose, it occurred to me to apply, through the interest of powerful friends, for the diploma of Canoness.

Should I be enabled to obtain this preliminary advantage, God and circumstances would aid me in the complete acquisition of my affranchisement.

The religious and knightly order of the Canonesses of Bavaria, analogous to that of the Commanders of Malta, interdicts marriage to the women who belong to it, but allows them to live at liberty with their own families. Through the interest of Prince Dendia, who had great influence at the court of Munich, I obtained in a short time the nomination to this, and also the insignia which it was necessary I should wear. In the hope of seeing me thus freed from further annoyance, and more tranquillized, General Saluzzi, my generous benefactor, paid 240 ducats for me as fees.

One apprehension remained. Would the Court of Naples grant me the royal "Exequatur"? By good luck the Minister, Fortunato, signed it without suspecting that I had taken the veil. Having obtained this without much difficulty, I made another step in advance; I addressed a petition to Rome for a further permission which should authorize me to be transferred from the Order of San Benedetto to that of Sant' Anna della Canonichese di Baviera. But here again I encountered the toils and impediments of the priesthood. Cardinal Riario observed, with a sneer, that I might wear the insignia of that court over my Benedictine dress.

I had to endure at the same time other affronts and annoyances still greater. The Sisters of the Conservatorio were divided into three parties. One was that of the Abbess, composed of oblates, to the highest degree bigoted, and priest-worshippers; another, that of the younger Sisters—persons of somewhat liberal sentiments, or rather, it might be said, less contented with their state; a third, that of the pupils, and others of the nuns who neither formed league with the first nor sympathised with the second party. The animosities between them had reached such a degree that they would turn out of the way in meeting them either in the corridors or garden.

That French sovereign who gave his name to his age when he announced his "I am the State," was less inflated with pride in the consciousness of his own dominion than was the leader of the fanatical party—the Abbess. With active intellect, but petulant and unmanageable; as miserly as an old maid; above all, obstinate and ignorant—she was Sanfidesta born, and would have made excellent material for a pope had she been born a man. Such was the picture one of the sisters of the opposition, of rather sarcastic turn, gave of her—who, seeing her one day enter the room, said, "Here comes the Antipope."

Prejudged in the mind of this woman by the informations given her by the sisterhood of San Gregorio, could I remain in the Conservatorio without

becoming the object of the most active espionage. The Abbess, soon perceiving my sympathy for the sisters of the liberal party, suddenly withdrew her favour from me to the extent even of not saluting me. Having repeatedly gone to her room to wish her good night, according to custom, she did not deign to receive me. I consequently gave myself no further trouble in going thither. Even the nuns of her party would no longer salute me.

Although an alien to this community, I yet conformed myself to their practices, and took a lively interest in their affairs. This good will on my part was otherwise interpreted by the Superior, who forgetting that I was a cloister nun, and herself but simply an oblate, pretended to command me as she would have done a pupil.

She saw on my table one day a couple of volumes of the "Storie" of Cantu. She took them up, and turned over a few pages of the yet uncut book, and again laying them down. "I will wager that these are political works," cried she, "and consequently excommunicated. And here, Madam, I must tell you once for all that books inscribed on the Index do not enter into my Conservatorio."

An opportunity occurred in a short time for me to render a service to the Communità, and I did it with my whole heart; laying aside all resentment for embittered feeling created by the uncourteous con-

duct of the elder nuns to me. The French Sisters of the Order of St. Vincent de Paule had for many years obtained the use of a portion of the Conservatorio for a public school. Not content with a portion, they coveted the whole, and were about to succeed in their design of appropriating what they coveted. The inmates, in consternation at such danger, and counting no protectors, designed appealing to the king.

Through the influence of General Saluzzi, I obtained an early audience for the Abbess, and also for one of the Governors of the Conservatorio. Nor did I confine myself to this, but obtained, also through the General, the presentation of a petition to the king, and the consignment of a royal decree, which at once decided the matter in their favour.

I laboured, however, for a class of persons which, acting like the cat, only scratches the hand which caresses it.

Shut up in the convent from the age of eighteen, my studies had been cut short, as masters were not permitted within its walls. I could only cultivate any literature unassisted, and also in concealment. Music, alone, I was permitted to exercise so far as it was of service in the choir. My position being now somewhat changed, and being passionately fond of music, like all Neapolitans, I purchased a pianoforte to sing and accompany myself.

Had a shell exploded in the Conservatorio it could not have produced more consternation than did my innocent pastime. The bigots took fire at once, and then I, to avoid any further annoyances and evil speaking, I confined myself to playing, making a sacrifice of my singing. This was not enough, it was evident they sought a pretext to disgust me with the Conservatorio.

One day Maria Giuseppe came to inform me that the Abbess was highly incensed with me, and would no longer permit me to play—music having been always forbidden in the Conservatorio. I betook myself at once to the Abbess's apartment, where she received me with the air of a Caliph, without even asking me to sit down.

"I have received a message from you by my servant," I said.

"Yes," replied she, eyeing me sideways. "I am much displeased at the scandalous character of your playing."

"I cannot understand how playing the piano can scandalize?"

"Yesterday you played a tarantella over and over again."

I could not resist a burst of laughter.

"In the first place," said I, "I did not play that which you say I did. You do not understand music, and have mistaken one thing for another; but even

if I had, I do not see any difference between such and the opera airs, whose words are almost all of the subject of love, and which airs are daily played on the organ in all churches during the Mass and the Benediction."

"I won't hear all this folly!" Stamping her foot and gesticulating, she proceeded—"The Cardinal said you were only coming here for a six months' stay: it is now nearly a year, and there is no sign of your going."

"I have not been quite useless in this Conservatorio," I replied, with difficulty curbing my indignation. "Had I not used my interest with my relative, General Saluzzi, you would have been but a short-reigned Abbess."

At these words, raising her voice to a loud pitch, she cried—

"It was your duty—yes, it was your duty—for we received you when all the convents of Naples refused to take you."

I left the room without replying, and as I proceeded to my own, vented my bitterness on the Cardinal who, hindering me from going to my mother's house, had forced me to occupy the same residence with a set of malignant nuns.

In the month of June I again applied for permission to get out, as during the preceding year. At first it was denied me; but matters being at this time

managed according to the shifting of political affairs, and the Pope having fled from Rome to Gaeta, it was at last granted to me after reiterated solicitations.

My mother, at my instance, went to Gaeta, to seek an audience of Pope Pius IX. She was the bearer of a petition from me, in which I prayed for secularization, remaining bound by vows simply as Canoness. And as the nuns of San Gregorio had commenced proceedings against my relative, who, at the time of my taking the veil, had feigned himself my debtor for 1000 crowns, I entreated that he should be liberated from such unjust demands.

The Holy Father seemed moved by the prayers of my mother—he looked round the room for writing materials, but not seeing any, he bade her return in two days. My inexorable persecutor, in the mean time—the Cardinal Archbishop—having been apprised of this proceeding, posted off to Gaeta, where he arrived the day after this interview—the bearer of the very letter, which I had addressed to his Holiness under the seal of confession—intercepted and opened by himself.

On my mother's return to him she found the Pope changed; he said to her with much seriousness, "Madam, let your daughter remain satisfied with that which she has already obtained; who asks too much gets nothing. She wishes to change both her dress

and condition: we cannot consent thereto. What would the others say and do who are bound in the same condition as herself. I had forgotten her name the other day—Cardinal Riario has recalled it to my memory — I have now in my possession a paper which she addressed to me two years ago."

Further prayers were useless.

A month later a Pontifical Brief was communicated to me by Riario, in which Pius IX. granted me the "favour" to reside fixedly in the Conservatorio under cloistral conditions; to go out during the summer months if the doctors thought that I required sea-bathing—always providing that it should please the Archbishop to permit me—and with regard to the suit instigated by the nuns of San Gregorio, he ordered that I should pay into the treasury of that convent 1000 ducats, and receive from them a monthly payment proportioned to the sum paid.

Up to that period I had received 14½ ducats monthly for the maintenance of myself and servant; henceforth we were to exist on a monthly pittance of six ducats. Priestly charity and munificence! How was I to exist?

Necessity has no law; I was obliged to limit my dinner to a single dish, and accustom my palate to black bread. This I did—whilst the author of my indigence, clad in purple and fine linen, was giving sumptuous entertainments to certain of his colleagues

—papal parasites, fugitives from Rome who had flowed in upon the Bourbon to plan the stronger riveting of the irons on the people.

Pius IX. came to Naples, changing locality as he changed colour and sentiments. Although he went out into public frequently, I deemed it superfluous—nay, dangerous—to have recourse again to his mercy. He who shut his ears to the groans of his country, by what supreme privilege would the lamentations of a poor nun reach them? Flanked as he was by a Ferdinand II. and by a Riario, how could he, even if he would, give ear to my petition?

The fanaticism, alone, of the dregs of the Neapolitan people sustained these two vulgar enemies of every good still in their tottering seats. And the king of Rome, feeble of heart, still weaker in mind; thirsting for popularity, incapable of a permanent acquisition of it, was putting the foundering bark of the poor church in tow of their galley.

One evening towards dusk, whilst on my return to the Conservatorio, the police prevented the carriage which conveyed me from passing the "Piazza della Pigne." The Pope was visiting the Museum, and it was not possible to make way through the crowd. I was constrained to make a great circuit, returning back and going round by the Vicaria, and then ascend by San Pietro a Majella.

This delay, occurring from no fault of mine, pro-

cured me considerable impertinence from the enraged portress, whose bloodshot eyes scowled fiercely, as she added—

"If we have the misfortune to have you another year, by my faith, you don't put your foot outside this door!"

The Pope, prior to leaving Naples, desired to visit in its turn each of the cloister convents. When the turn came to that of San Giovanni, the nuns of the Conservatorio sent a message to the Sisters of that convent, begging them to conduct the Holy Father to a spot which, from the approximation of the two convents, would give them the opportunity of seeing him. They led him to a terrace; he gave his benediction to them all. I know not who may have drawn his attention to me—he looked at me, and said—

"A special benediction on the cloister nun," and raising his hand, he blessed me. That act brought me no consolation. I had looked for health, peace, and emancipation from my ignoble servitude. Which of these boons did this benediction bring me?

In a few days Pius IX. returned to Rome, rejoicing as his predecessor, who, on the fall of Rienzi, returned bishop and lord into the Eternal City. The Cardinal then seized the opportunity to set on me again. It reached my ears that all the rigours of the cloister were to be enforced against me, and it was proposed

to replace me at once in my first sojourn—to renounce once for all any hope of enlargement—to resign myself to the lot of the other nuns, without planning further tentatives; and, as a recompense for such act of abdication, they displayed in the distance the distinction of an abbesship, which a special Brief would procure for me, notwithstanding my youth.

How far more tempting to me was the black crust which I shared with my good and faithful Maria Giuseppa.

I answered the purpled priest that I would rather live a free woman in a hut than a prisoner in the most gorgeous palace—that I was not ambitious of the honours which came through priests.

As a reply, he deprived me of even my meagre pittance of six ducats.

I was now utterly destitute—high and dry on the sands.

I had some little skill in female work, and the Omnipotent, who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, had not deprived me of all activity and industry. Rather than be at the cost of the Conservatorio, or at the charge of another, I would have gained my living with my own hands; but how was I to make my labour profit me, living in an enemy's house, and groping about through the darkness which covers the future.

To a relative who had reproached him with this

cowardly persecution of a woman, the Cardinal replied, hard as flint:—

"Her mother is rich, let her look to her."

Stretched upon that bed of Procrastes—jammed, so to say, between the door and the wall, destitute, in fine, of means of existence, I had recourse to my energy of character to escape from such desperate straits.

One evening, instead of returning as usual to the Conservatorio, I informed the Abbess, by letter, that she might shut the gate between vespers and nones; for as I was not willing to eat the bread of another, I should remain at home.

CHAPTER XX.

THE "ANNUNZIATA" OF CAPUA.

THE nuns of Costantinopoli despatched my letter at once to the Cardinal, who was petrified as he read it,—he could not persuade himself that my flight was real. My confessor was very roughly handled by him for not having known how to hinder me from taking this desperate step.

In abject terror at the cardinal's ire and vindictive instincts, the Canon, with trembling hand, wrote to me to supplicate me to return at once to the Conservatorio.

I answered him that he was to give himself no trouble about me; that he might say to his Superior that he did not wish any longer to direct the conscience of a refractory nun. This second suggestion was not a mere hold which I caught at—in my anger against the abject priestcraft of Italy I felt not the slightest disposition to confess myself. A

week passed, and all seemed to have calmed down again. During the morning I drove out with my mother; in the evening, as a small party was generally assembled in her rooms, I did not quit my own, but received there the visit of some lady friend only.

The first week over, a letter came from the vicar: it informed me that on the day following I should receive a visit from a canon, sent to speak to me by the Cardinal.

This person came, in fact, and commenced to exhort me in the name of saints of both sexes—to extend promises and flatteries—to launch threats—to advise me, in fine, to return to the cage forthwith. I answered him roundly, "No." He added, that if my flight was motived by the suspension of my allowance, that would infallibly be restored to me the moment I returned to my obedience—quitting my relations, and shutting myself up in the convent. His Eminence wished to make a favour of that which was my due. He wasted his breath, in fine, for a whole hour in trying to persuade me that my soul was in danger of damnation, and to disobey the Cardinal was tantamount to going straitway over to the devil. I answered that my conscience was purer and more tranquil than that of his Cardinal; it was he who should fear the eternal fire for acting the despot, making (since he well knew my repugnance to confinement), a state affair of my liberty.

The messenger finding that, instead of giving, knocks he received them, apologised, and took his leave.

After this attempt upon me I remained another fortnight in peace. My mother at that time lived in the Palazzo Ripa, at Ponte Nuovo, where she had formed an intimacy with the Princess, the proprietress of the palace, and also with General Torchierelli, another inhabitant, a person of some consideration.

The Princess, who came one evening to pay me a visit, said, that she had heard from the General that Riario, after a secret colloquy with the king, had given to Peccheneda, the director of police, the order to proceed to my arrest.

What motive urged these persons thus to warn me? Friendship perhaps? Perhaps the liberal sentiments we shared? Nothing of the kind! Too bigoted, too devoted to the Bourbon dynasty to have anything in common with a nun rebellious to authority. Nay, I remember a lady member of their family—a woman of rigid bigotry—had held a secret conference with certain doctors and casuists upon a most important case of conscience, whether for example, by inhabiting the same house with me she did not run the risk of the excommunication attached to me. The conference decided that she might dwell under the same roof, provided always she avoided saluting me! The consideration of the

warning, therefore, arose from the dread that an arrest should take place in their palace, and from no other.

Left to ourselves, we deliberated on the best course to pursue, and it was decided to forestall the arrest by flight. But where conceal myself? Other secure asylum, excepting that of some bishopric, could not preserve me from the clutches of authority. Where was I to find this generous bishop, who would extend hospitality and protection to me?

After much reflection I remembered that the Cardinal of Cassua, Cassano Serra, was a man of rare goodness, and decided to apply to him.

We passed a most agitated night; every moment I went to the window to see if the police were not coming—I fancied every moment I heard the door-bell ring, and footsteps ascending the stairs.

Heavy, even suffocating, was the night air which passed over my face as I remained at the window; strong gusts at times swept the dust in whirls from the ground, and threatened to extinguish the lamp of the Madonna at the street corner. The sky was dark and threatening; all in that quarter slept; the lanes were deserted; there was no other sound than that of the slow step of the distant patrol.

My mother was asleep, dressed on the sofa. Towards two o'clock, seated at the window, with my head leaning on the pessicunes, I fell asleep, only to dream fearfully. I thought three executioners seized

me, one by an arm, one by the head, and a third by the throat, dragging me along the ground down the marble staircase of the palace.

I awoke, strong and repeated shivering fits seized me, my heart beat violently, a feeling of suffocation in the throat, the signs of a nervous attack which soon came on. Whether the attack was long and violent I do not know; no one was near me. When I came to myself I was lying on the ground, with aching limbs, exhausted, oppressed, the mind even more worn out than the body. A hundred sad thoughts, a hundred fears, unknown to me up to that moment, assailed my heart with sad presages. My evasion seemed to me but a temporary palliative, for the police must sooner or later trace me out. Taking flight seemed a step as fruitless as it was stupid, and even injurious, and I seemed to myself to be persisting in a course of foolish resistance.

Whither shall I go? What shall I do? I asked myself. Shall I roam about the world a fugitive with no resting-place? Do not the ill-omened vows which separate me from mother and sisters suffice? Must I, with my own hand, widen the abyss which isolates me? Had I been a man, far otherwise would I struggle against my inexorable fate,—but a woman, and a woman reprehensible in the eyes of the world for having taken so bold a step—poor, ill, without counsel, deprived of the compassionate aid

which would reach forth a friendly hand to draw me from the abyss where I sink and am drowned—what can I oppose, and how long resist—oh, my God!—the combined persecution of two powers, which, with ever increasing animosity, assail me! Rather than beg from door to door the bitter bread of exile, would it not be better for me to yield to destiny, to resign myself to hard necessity, to appease by simulations the wrath of superiors, and insinuate myself into their good graces, and, not being able to burst my chain, at least somewhat to lighten the heavy weight. Assured by my reconsideration and position, and pleased by my devotion, they will not alone leave me in peace, but even heap favours on me—will grant me grades in power, dignities—in fine, an abbesship is no paltry gratification of the ambition of a nun.

In haste I rose, lit the lamp, drew forth writing materials, and dipped my pen in the ink, and, with fingers trembling from the recent convulsion, proceeded to trace the following lines, which will not readily quit my memory—

"YOUR EMINENCE,

"We are all in this world liable to deviate from the right path. Our Lord Jesus Christ alone was born sinless. I, like the rest, seduced by the temptations of the wicked one—"

Here I stopped, the pen fell from my fingers upon the paper, and for a long time I sat, with my head leaning on the table.

"Wretch that I am!" I exclaimed at last, bounding to my feet, and fiercely tearing the paper to pieces. "Wretch! is it not enough that the chains clog your feet, but must you offer your neck too! Have you then aspired after liberty only to desert your standard at the hour of battle? And honour, and nobler aspirations—your faith, your heart, your conscience. Coward! what have you made of these? Take counsel and comfort from the history of your country—urged on by conflicting passions, governed by lax power, abandoned to strange seduction, a prey to snares which surrounded her on every side—unhappy Italy fell into bondage precisely as you have done. In the same manner she languished for long years imprisoned in the cloister, which princes spiritual and temporal erected for her; in the same manner she wept, she implored, she protested. Your own lot is analogous to these changes and chances, your expiation is alike—alike your vows—even to your late efforts to recover the exercise of your free will. And now you shrink, and at what a moment! on the very vigil of your redemption, when the bright sun of young Italy has begun to disperse the darkness of tyranny!"

At daybreak I set off with my mother for Capua.

Cardinal Cassano received us with extreme courtesy. He was a man easy of access, free from prejudice, and incapable of meanness. He promised me his protection, and assured me he would do all in his power to see me freed from the state of hardship and constraint in which I was placed. After midday his vicar came, sent by him to arrange matters with me. I found in this priest a most worthy man. Not content with receiving my confession, which I made kneeling before him bathed in tears, he requested me to come the next day to the palace to relate to him my whole life.

Assured that my motives in this matter were only pure and noble, he asked me for all the papal documents which I had been in receipt of, up to that day. In our hurried departure they had been forgotten in Naples, which obliged my mother to return for them, and, as this took time, the good vicar advised that for my greater security I should enter a "Ritero," where I might go out at any hour of the day I desired, provided I passed the night there. One of these "Riteri" was called the Annunziata. The vicar found there an unoccupied room for me, and begged that I would not be influenced by the name of the establishment, for though there were foundlings in it, there were also a small number of religieuses who did not belong to that class of women. He supplied me with a portion of the furniture, the rest I hired

from the hotel. I then, and Maria Giuseppa, who never deserted me, entered the Ritero, and after two days my mother took her departure. The Superiors paid me great attention. The vicar sent his own servant every day to know if I wanted anything, and the Cardinal gave directions that the religieuses and the girls should pay me every respect.

A few days passed by, during which Riario was at some pains to find out where I was. When he discovered this, he penned an impertinent epistle to Cardinal Cassano, reproaching him for having given me refuge. This latter returned for answer that an honourable nun was in question, not, as his letter would seem to make her, a fugitive from prison, guilty of some enormity. Moreover, that it rather behoved the Archbishop of Naples to express his thanks for having received her than to censure him. Riario suppressed his rage, only to launch it forth at a more favourable opportunity.

We come now to the ignoble retreat into which my destiny had launched me. The Annunziata at Capua is a magnificent building, and the church most beautiful. The religieuses have each their separate room, but the foundlings sleep crowded tegether in long dark corridors, which one cannot enter without disgust. At that time there were nearly three hundred of these girls.

I was shocked by the squalor, dirt, and wretched

appearance of these poor creatures: deprived of the influence of domestic virtue, and of the requisites which ennoble the weaker sex—destitute of all instruction; rude, loud talking, petulant, dissembling—they lived as it were chained together in one large common room. They appeared rather a herd of brute beasts, than a family of rational creatures living in a Christian land, and brought together there under the auspices of the church with the object of moral reformation. To these disagreeable qualities they added manners of the most disgusting familiarity, which they used with the soldiers of the garrison. The Abbess of the religieuses, who was also Superior of the foundlings, was quite unable to bridle their depravity. The poor woman, rendered cross and irritable by infirmity, and by the continual worry and vexation such a community caused her, had entirely abandoned the prudence and command of temper required for the management of such a community.

At that time Capua was in a state of great disorder, The prisoners had revolted; the pupils of the university had done the same, and attempted the life of the rector. These unfortunates of the Annunziata bethought themselves of doing likewise, and resolved nothing less than to assassinate the poor Abbess. Some little respect they had for me kept them within bounds for a while, but finally one of them, bolder

than the rest, laid a trap for her. There was above the staircase, like a tunnel, rather difficult of access. The wretched girl lay in wait at an upper window, and at the moment the Abbess was passing up let fall a heavy flowerpot. The poor woman only owed her life to the circumstance of having stopped for a moment before putting her foot on the fatal step.

One morning she found painted on her door two large black crosses, and over them a skull—a menace of death.

These ribalds put into operation every means of seduction that they might win over to their nefarious designs my servant; but Maria Giuseppa, who for probity and prudence made exception to the proverb—not only absurd, but false—that next to your brother, your servant is your greatest enemy, so far from lending an ear to their persuasions, was a rigid censor of their behaviour.

She censured their conduct severely on an occasion when the Abbess, having been confirmed in her office by the Superiors, they proceeded to ring the death-bell. They did even worse on another occasion, when, on the eve of a popular festa, the Abbess had prohibited them from ascending to the Belvedere, seeing that, under the pretence of looking at the fireworks, that indispensable condiment of Neapolitan spectacle, their object was to make signals to the military quarter. They, strongly resenting

this, heaped against the Abbess's door a dozen of their "paglericci," and fired them, and as the straw died down, took to leaping and dancing on the flames, as the idle boys of Naples are in the habit of doing when, at the street corners, they can set fire to the refuse of some stable. As I beheld them in the distance, ragged and barefooted, with dishevelled hair, and heard the horrible din they made, I seemed to be looking on at the phantasmagoria of some infernal sabbat of witches and demons. Meeting one of these one day—the ringleader of every outrageous freak, and who made more disturbance than all the rest, a tall thin creature, whose tongue never ceased—I begged her to remain, if she could, for a moment quiet. She kissed my hand and said:

"Excellenza! I am purposely noisy and impertinent."

"You are jesting with me."

"Gnora nò—I am impertinent—that I may get a husband."

"I don't understand you?"

"It's the case; any one who doesn't play the dickens here, runs the risk of dying an old maid. In this Annunziata, they don't do as in that of Naples, where the young men choose a wife, throwing a handkerchief at the girl they fancy most. Here the men (ugly or handsome, young or old, it matters little) come to the parlour. The Superior calls every one of us by name, one after another, until the article

suits the purchaser. Now you must know, that that old knowing one calls those first who are the most obstreperous—those who give her the most trouble—to get rid of them sooner."

I could not resist laughing at such counter cunning, and the next time I met the Superior, who had often advised with me on the subject of managing that pandemonium. I suggested the expedient of summoning the girls, not capriciously, but according to age; avoiding by this means purposed bad conduct.

Every day one young girl used to come to my room to wish me good morning—she was one of the quiet and well conducted, but pale and melancholy—she seemed to hide some mystery difficult to guess at. I asked her if she suffered from any indisposition; and at first she hesitated to answer; but afterwards, with much sighing and broken words, she consented to reveal to me that she was the victim of some sorcery. I took the office of trying to persuade her that witchcraft was mere imposture, and was not to be attended to; but I saw that I was only pounding water in a morter (pouring water into a sieve), for the poor girl had got hold of this fixed idea.

I begged her to describe to me how she considered herself bewitched, and she consented to relate the whole matter to me.

"She had," she said, "for some years received the attentions of so-and-so, who had gone temporarily to

Naples with his employers. Before separating, as he was now going to a distance from her, they were desirous reciprocally of swearing inviolable fidelity. But if the youth preserved his fealty, the Capuan girl did not remain so true; for, having formed an intimacy with a sergeant, she violated her oath. When this came to the ears of the former lover, he hastened back to Capua, and, without betraying his knowledge of her desertion of him, behaved to her in his usual manner, invited her to dinner, and, amongst other things presented her with some pastry which he had brought from Naples. On the day following, having assured himself that his disloyal love had devoured his present, he threw off the mask, and, confronting the traitress, exclaimed, with triumphant virulence, "Now I am avenged—the charm is working in you. Good-by!"

From that day forth the intellects of the unhappy girl began to give way; an extreme confusion of ideas and of feelings had brought her to that lamentable state.

"But why should you persist in attributing to witchcraft that which might be merely the effect of a combination of circumstances; or, even if you wish, to some poison put into that pastry?"

"No! No!" she replied, "I have the devil in my inside—I can't go into a church nor approach the sacrament."

"Come with me," I said—"I myself will take you into the choir—your evil one will be afraid of me."

"No! No! Oh, for pity's sake, I cannot; I should die."

I caught her by the hand, and, almost dragging her along, I forced her to descend the stairs. She wept, she trembled; she implored, and made continual struggles to free herself. After a long resistance, redoubled when we had reached the door, I finally succeeded in getting her in. I then forced her down on her knees before the altar—with a frightful shriek she bounded up again and fled.

Poor Naples! an age will not suffice to extirpate the ferocious superstition which besots you.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ARREST.

SADLY the days followed each other in my sojourn in the Annunziata—sadder still the nights—my mind full of the uncertain future.

I had collected together the necessary papers, and Cassano wrote a long letter to accompany these to the bishops and regulars in Rome. This eminent prelate, in this epistle, supported my request for secularization. He enumerated the wrongs and the trials I had undergone, and animadverted on the want of prudence of Riario, concluding a letter which manifested a strong interest in my case with the suggestion that possessing no natural disposition or vocation for the veil, it was little less than a miracle that I had not failed in the first duties of the monastic vows, when so reduced to a state bordering on despair; thence, seeing the fruitlessness of attempting to persuade me to pass the remainder of my life

in a cloister, he thought it but fitting and just that I should lay aside the Benedictine dress, and dress simply in black, residing as a single woman in the house of my mother, with the title of canoness.

I read this letter in the presence of Cassano himself, and thanked him for it with the liveliest expressions which gratitude dictated to me. I saw it enclosed with the other papers and sealed by the hand of the vicar himself, who deposited it upon the escritoire in readiness for the post, and with feelings of great satisfaction I withdrew to the Annunziata Maria Giuseppa's joy was unbounded. She thought all was over, and so it was. On that night we sat up until a late hour, calling up golden dreams of the future. But of what use are projects, the most matured and sound even, if events do not second them.

Two days later it was announced to me that Cassano was confined to his bed. This news appalled me. In five days he was a corpse!

And the letter?—Upon the escritoire still! And the vicar?—Suspended! And the new provisional Superior?—An enemy of Cassano! The Cardinal succeeding?—Cosenza!

Farewell hope!

What had I to do in Capua? I remained for another fortnight there upon a bed of thorns: the ex-vicar counselled me not to prolong my stay further

as Riario, knowing that I had been protected by Cassano, would undoubtedly recommence his perquisitions for a new series of persecutions. Besides, I possessed no funds to try my fate in another country. To meet my expenses I was forced to part with my piano and other objects of value.

I therefore returned to Naples, and on the ensuing day drove to the convent of San Niccola da Tolentino, of the Padri della Missione, situated in the quarter of San Carlo all' Arena. The Padre Spaccapietra resided there, a man not less estimable on account of his virtues than his learning, and who possessed much influence in Rome, the centre of his missions. When I had related to him all the circumstances of my case I requested his advice and aid. Spaccapietra was moved at my recital, and turning to my mother, who had accompanied me, replied—

"I am inclined to think, madam, that the subject of the arrest was a misapprehension on the part of General Turchiarola. This was not a case in which to arrest a religieuse. It is permitted occasionally to adopt this rigorous measure, but only when a nun has given motive to public scandal, and when she carried in her bosom the proof of her guilty intercourse. Have the kindness to give me your address. I will seek an interview this day with his Eminence, and later I will let you know the result of my conference."

Reassured by the discourse of the excellent missionary I returned home, comforted with the hope that Providence had not entirely abandoned me.

After the lapse of a few days the Padre came to report to me the result of a long interview with the Cardinal on the subject of my affair.

Riario had formally denied having gone to the king and obtained the order for my arrest.

He lied! yes! absolutely lied!

Spaccapietra had observed to him that he had no power to deprive me of the proceeds of my dower. Riario condescended to refund me the five months interest due to me, and promised to leave me in peace from thenceforth.

Some months of truce then passed by. My mother, satisfied with seeing me freed from the persecution of the priests, avoided giving the balls and receptions which had been her habit each year during the Carnival season. This determination was highly satisfactory to me, resolved as I was to avoid fresh annoyances, and to lead a retired life, divided between study and household duties. And as the acquirement of one's country's history seemed to me a point of duty, not only to the men, but also to the women of Italy of our day, I found means to procure for myself the best authors on this branch of national education. It was then that I perused Machiavelli Guillcardini, Botta, Santero, La Colletta, and some

accounts of the War of Independence of America, and of the regeneration of the Greeks.

In the month of June one of my sisters, who resided at Gaeta, wrote to say that her husband was seriously ill. My mother set out immediately for that place. I did not accompany her. Ferdinand II. was at that moment there, disgusted with his sojourn in Naples, much as that descendant of Heraclius, the assassin of his own brother, and the scourge of his subjects, becoming disgusted with his capital and his rule, fled to Sicily, haunted night and day by the spectre of his murdered relative. When my mother left I went, together with Maria Giuseppa, to reside with my other married sister, who lived in Naples.

She resided in the Vico Canale sopra Toledo, on the sixth story, her means being very limited. Her husband had been compromised in the convulsion of 1848, and suspended from exercising his profession as a barrister, living in great pecuniary privation, and under the surveillance of the Bourbon police.

My own restricted means, as well as the penury of my brother-in-law, would not allow me to make use of a carriage every time an urgent matter called me out of the house; and amongst such urgent occupations was to be reckoned the distribution of the secret correspondence of the members of a patriotic society, at that time both efficacious and beneficent, though superfluous if not even injurious at the

present time, an office which persons of the other sex could not well assume without awakening the suspicion of some of the innumerable spies which at that period thronged the streets, the houses, and even the churches of Naples. If then I was not enabled to go out in a carriage, how was it possible for me to walk in the streets in a Benedictine dress, in a city where the idlers of it made it a point never to allow a woman to pass unmolested by their impertinences. I quitted the nun's dress and put on one of black silk, such as Cardinal Cassano and many other persons had sensibly advised me to do.

In the mean time Father Spaccapietra had set out on a mission to Japan, leaving me as a remembrance an "Imitation of Christ," and the memory of his exemplary charity. On the evening of the 13th of June, having retired to my room with Maria Guiseppa, we passed a long time on the terrace in recounting my various vicissitudes and trials in the cloister, consoling each other, and rejoicing over the power to breathe freely at last. All around us breathed tranquillity, prosperity, and freedom; happiness reigned throughout. The warm air was loaded with the perfume which the choice plants of the Belvedere gave out, and the moon on high pursued her solitary way, proud in her splendour, through silver-edged clouds of wondrous form and beauty. I felt new life in the thought that I had

once again recovered the position which Providence had at first assigned me,—to lend my slender aid to the service of my fellow-creatures. But fortune, which so often plays foul with human happiness, was preparing to make me pay dearly that momentary gleam of felicity.

Maria Giuseppa, the most constant and faithful sharer of my misfortunes, ventured her whole happiness on her assurance never to abandon me as long as I was unhappy. Who would have said that that very evening was destined to be the last in which we were to remain together.

On the day following, at one o'clock, I sat at dinner with my relatives. There was a ring at the door. An old female servant of my sister went to the kitchen-window which looked out on the stairs, and returning in a state of agitation, said a priest stood there, who asked for me. Thinking that it was the ex-vicar of Capua, who had come frequently to see me, I said, " Let him come in."

But my heart, so long habituated to disasters, and ready to presage evil, commenced palpitating violently.

I heard the tread, not of one, but of several persons. I approached the door to listen, and overheard my brother's voice in altercation with the new comers. I went out, and beheld a man of colossal size, enormous head, a face like a full moon a species of Briareus, occupying the divan, quite at

his ease; by his side a priest of sinister aspect, meagre, and livid hue, whilst my brother-in-law, with an expression of utter consternation, appeared to support himself with both his hands on the back of a chair. Although perfectly unknown to me, those two figures made me shudder.

The giant, putting his jaws in motion, asked in a voice, not unlike the sound of a triton's shell,—

"Are you the Religieuse Henrietta Caracciolo Forino?"

"Yes," I replied; "to whom have I the honour of speaking?"

"With the Commissary Morbilli."

O God! what name was that. I started as from a violent electric shock,—that name was the terror of all Naples.

The Duke Morbilli (poor nobility of the country of Vico!), the faithful bloodhound of the king and satellite of Del Caretto, had risen in reputation, less by virtue of his most active services, than by the terror of his visits, and by the mythological voracity which characterizes them. What Neapolitan would not rather have preferred to let into his house—I will not say the Prince of Evil—but at least fire, or smallpox, or any other human destruction, rather than Morbilli.

"And this person," he continued pointing, to his associate, "this is a priest of the court."

I understood all that awaited me.

"What do you want of me?" I demanded, with the manner of a Carbonaro surprised *in flagrante delicto* by the Commissary.

"You are arrested."

"Arrested!—is it possible! Why?"

"Most certain; and you must come with us."

"Where?"

"To a convent."

"To what convent?"

"The retreat of Mondragone."

"May I know by sentence of what tribunal, or, at least, by whose order?"

"That does not concern you."

There are critical moments in which the Almighty inspires the weak with courage, that they may not be trodden down by the tyranny of the stronger.

"It concerns me," I cried, "more than it regards yourself. I will follow you, however. I go to dress myself."

Initiated in all the secrets of the thief-taker's profession, Morbilli wished to satisfy himself whether any evasion was possible from my room, and, seeing but a single exit, he was pleased to permit me to dress in liberty. I was followed by Maria Giuseppa, whose extreme terror depriving her of speech, almost of reason, effected the greatest confusion in mine, as well as in her own dress.

In half-an-hour we were both ready. "Don't be so cast down," I said to her, caressing her lightly on the cheek. "Compose yourself before you leave the room, so that these people may not have the satisfaction of seeing you thus."

"You are right, Signora," she replied, and forced a smile to please me, whilst with difficulty she refrained from tears.

"You may proceed in advance," said the commissary to the priest; "the Signora has made no resistance."

The Vampyre, making his bow, disappeared. Morbilli turned to Maria Giuseppa, who, laden with shawls and other objects, stood ready to follow me.

"And you—who are you?" he asked.

"I am the lay-sister."

"You can't accompany the Signora to the convent."

"Why?" asked one, and "Why?" asked the other of us.

"The Signora will be taken to the Ritiro; you will come with me to the Commissariat to be questioned there, and then sent to your country.

The cries, the shrieks, and wailings which the poor young girl uttered, her frantic clinging to my person as if for refuge and protection, then the groans and despair she gave way to, nearly made me lose my self-command. The emotion, only suppressed by a feeling

of *amour propre*, so convulsed the muscles of my mouth, that had I wished to speak I could not have done so.

The Commissary, calling up an inspector, who waited at the door, gave her into his charge. I did not utter a word for fear of bursting into tears, but only gave Giuseppa a last farewell kiss, and begged the old servant not to abandon her until she was sent back to her country. Then turning to the Commissary—

"I hope," I said, "that, knowing whose daughter I am, you will not oblige me to make this transit on foot."

"Nor prevent myself nor her sister accompanying her," added my brother-in-law.

Morbill, ordered a carriage to be brought, and permitted my relatives to bear me company. Maria Giuseppa, to the last, never ceased clinging to my hands and covering them with kisses.

"Courage!" I said to her finally; and, freeing myself from her, was the first to go out.

The stairs were thronged with sbirri, as if the object had been to surprise a horde of brigands in their lair; and more than a hundred people had gathered at the front door to enjoy the spectacle.

The church and edifice of "Santa Maria delle Grazie di Mondragone," situated near San Carlo alle Mortelle, form the retreat which Helen Aldobrandini, Duchess of Mondragone, prepared in 1653

for noble Neapolitan ladies who, reduced and widowed, desired to lead a tranquil and monastic life. At the present day there are some few pupils annexed, but, in substance, the establishment is destined as a house of correction.

Arrived there at a little before three, I ascended the staircase which conducts upwards from the entrance gate. At the second I found two priests posted, and near them the Superior, who here is called the Prioress. One of those priests was that spectre whom Morbilli had taken with him at my arrest; the other was the ecclesiastical Superior of the place, the same who, by his furious reactionary deeds, left in 1848 sad remembrance of his name. For his immense devotion to the Bourbon dynasty he had been decorated with the order of Francis I., and styled himself no less than "Cavaliere."

From the scraping and bowing which this latter performed before the Commissary, and the words which passed between them, I concluded that they were acquaintances of old standing—hounds in the same leash.

My brother-in-law, who had up to this restrained his rage, now broke out in bitter invectives against the Cardinal.

"If you do not hold your tongue," cried the ecclesiastical Superior, "I will knock your words down your throat."

"If you don't go, and that at once, about your business," followed the Commissary, "I will arrest you."

I seized my brother by the arm, and shaking it violently cried,—

"If I, who am the victim, remain silent, why need you excite yourself? Take back my sister—we have reached the prison."

All remained silent. The Commissary then required the receipt for my person, which was made out by the priest, and he took his departure, and by a sign I intimated to my sister that she should take her leave for fear her husband might compromise himself.

"Write at once to Gaeta," I said, as I embraced her, "and for pity sake take the same care of Maria Giuseppa as you would of myself."

Left alone with the sbirro and the two gaolers at my side, I was made to mount up to the third story of the building; then they conducted me into a large gloomy chamber, which had the look of an inquisition room of torture. It was lit from two holes only; the light both scanty and dim on account of the immense Villanova Palace which stood opposite; the walls naked and filthy; the ceiling with bare rafters; the pavement of broken tiles; the entire furniture, two rickety chairs—no more.

The Prioress and Superior left the room to

converse in an under-tone. The priest of the court alone remained with me.

This man, seeing me thus abandoned, deprived of all protection, thought to turn the opportunity to some profit, and let me see the advantage of his protection; then said—

"Should you want anything, say so freely to the Prioress, who feels much sympathy for you, as your humble servant does also."

He accompanied this last phrase with a low bow, and a diabolical smile, which exposed his horrid range of teeth.

I turned on him in a fury of indignation, and, pointing to the door, cried—

"Leave the room! go, and tell the miscreant who sent you here, that I trust to see both of you, and those who resemble you, soon sent to perdition."

He slunk out of the room.

I knelt down, and, joining my hands together, and raising my eyes to heaven, and my heart to God, I prayed from the depths of my soul for my outraged innocence.

The Almighty does not reject, but listens to the humble and contrite heart.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE "RITIRO" OF MONDRAGONE.

HAVING been for a year and a half liberated from the poisonous and damaging influence of isolation, regenerated by the baptism of social intercourse, I felt incomparably more severely the effects of the solitude which now surrounded me; not a solitary voice near me, not a trace of living thought, no longer the grateful sound of human occupation; nothing else in my new desert but the monotonous hum of flies, in contrast with the hurricane which wasted wildly within me.

One prominent consideration occupied my thoughts from the first. What authority had decreed my arrest? was it the ecclesiastical or civil? was I once more the victim of Riario's animosity and of his camorra? or was it haply an imputation of another character, resulting from the spy system, which had thrown me into the clutches of the political power? The first was probable, the second possible; but more likely than all was the connection of both.

In either case my position was most grievous, most horrible. I was a woman. The world, ever too ready with its suspicions and its evil speaking—how would it have interpreted my sudden confinement in a retreat whose equivocal reputation afforded a ready handle to calumny? Transferred beyond all social contact, what efficacious means could I have employed to refute the false reports which the priests would not fail to spread to the detriment of my reputation and to palliate their own conduct?

Before this last unkindest stroke of fate I failed to find in intrepidity that moral energy which had hitherto aided me to resist the blows of misfortune. To be a man, were it but for a few days—to find myself in London, in Paris, in America, in a free land, master of no more than a pen and a few sheets of paper—I felt as if I could have renounced a throne had such been at my disposition.

An hour later there was a gentle knock at the door. I made no answer—it was repeated. I still remained silent. On the third repetition I heard the voice of the Prioress, who begged me to open it.

"Am I not mistress of even this hole?" I replied angrily.

"Yes, Signora, you are mistress; but you should open the door."

"Break it down if you like it. I won't open it."

The Prioress began to entreat me in humble tones,

justifying the disturbance she gave me by the necessity of doing something for me.

I then opened it, and I saw her quite confounded by the change I had since undergone. Two servants carried a bed, a small table, and a light.

"Have the goodness to procure me writing materials," I said.

She made a grimace like a person who has an unpleasant communication to make, and, uttering the sentence with hesitation, replied,—

"I am very sorry to inform you that reading and writing are forbidden by the superiors until further orders."

"I cannot then communicate even with my relations by letter?"

"That you may do, provided I read your letters before they are sealed, and that I see the answers before they are delivered to you."

"Is every book without exception prohibited me?"

"We have several books of devotion here; you can read as many of them as you wish."

The circle of my existence became narrower and narrower. "I asked what were the precise orders given on my account?"

"Rigorous, most rigorous. You are forbidden to see or to speak with any one whatsoever. You are not to receive either parents, friends, or acquaintances, or any externs who might come inquiring for you;

nay, to take away every possibility of a clandestine intelligence, you are prohibited to stand at the windows, to mount the terrace, to enter the parlour; nor will it be permitted you to have any person attached to your service."

"Pray what is this Ritiro called?"

"The Ritiro di Mondragone."

"It would be better named the prison of the Holy Office. Can you tell me further, if I am to be confined for a length of time?"

"Who knows? You might remain two, three, five, or ten years, at the will of the superiors. To accustom yourself to bear it patiently, you must put a speedy liberation out of your head."

"Don't conceal the truth from me, I entreat you. Am I condemned for life?"

"Address yourself to God, and think of your soul."

"Enough!" I cried.

And I fell senseless upon the floor.

When I again opened my eyes I found myself extended on the bed, and once more alone. I then observed to my dismay a confusion in my ideas; a sluggishness in the reasoning powers for which I could not divine a cause. I was fully conscious of a warping of the mental faculties; but whence came that aberration? was it the effect of my fainting? was it from excessive anguish? or was it perhaps caused by the contusion on the head in falling on the tiled floor?

The more effort I made to seize the helm of reason which escaped my hand, the more I saw that this was no longer in my power; my discernment was weakened, my memory confused, all my faculties jumbled in confusion; and in the midst of this chaos one fixed idea predominated—one unvarying repeated image, as an incessant sound of hammering—the man whom I had loved passionately, Domenico, become a priest, and in the garb of one in the act of reading to me my sentence of death.

A phase in my existence, through an indeterminate period, dates from this moment, and continues oscillating at intervals between reason and the total overthrow of the mental faculties.

I will spare the reader the weariness that a recital of my delirium would entail on him. Still in continuing the thread of my narrative with the same exactness, and bound not to permit any hiatus to occur in it, it may be allowed me here to premise a prayer, and that is, that I may not be rendered responsible for any acts committed in these moments—acts which as a faithful narrator I must not conceal, but whose reprehensible nature I myself am the first to deplore.

. . . . .

At dusk a lay sister entered with a light, followed by the Prioress, furnished with salts and scent-bottles, which she wished me to use. I told her that I had devised a plan (and would put it into execution) to

frustrate the publicity of my suffering. The profoundly serious tone in which I said this caused her to laugh. This was a woman under forty years of age, fresh and vigorous still, and affable rather than otherwise. My condition moved her much, and she was lavish of compassionate words, but equally tender of her office: she looked for the approbation of her superiors in executing their commands to the letter. Later a basin of soup was brought me: I refused it. The night which followed was the most cruel of my whole life—a real death agony. I arose many times during it to renew a prayer to God to preserve me my reason. As soon as it was day they brought me coffee: I sent it away untouched, as I did the dinner also.

At two o'clock my luggage was brought, and at the same time the Prioress handed me a letter from my sister, which had been previously opened by her. How my sufferings were assuaged when I learned that Maria Giuseppa, after her examination, had been consigned to the care of her uncle! My sister added that she had already written to my mother, who, when she heard of the occurrence, would not fail to demand an audience of the king. My head whirled round, my hand refused to write; nevertheless I managed to form a few lines to warn her that, for fear I should prefer a petition to the pope or any other superior authority, my letters were always opened—that she was therefore to take care what she wrote.

The day following the repulsive face of the ecclesiastic reappeared at the door. At sight of it I felt my blood boil; and wholly unable to restrain my indignation, I broke out into invectives against the cardinal and likewise the king. Strange reception for a director of public censorship! Don Pietro Calandrelli thought to impose silence on me, as he did daily on the authors of grammars and dictionaries. He well knows whether I silenced him.

"I hold," I said, "the visit of an inquisitorial priest as an insult. Liberate me then from your presence, if you do not wish insult for insult."

"Your unjust anger," he answered, "will not permit you to see that you outrage your benefactors. When you have calmed down from this state of irritation the cardinal will come and visit you."

I recoiled a step.

"Tell him," I exclaimed, "not to dare to come—at the sight of him I should become a tigress."

The priest turned to the Prioress.

"She is mad, indeed!" he said—"Let us go."

This exclamation of the priest served to upset the just balance of my ideas. "Am I then really mad?' I went saying to myself.

Four days now passed, during which I persevered in refusing all aliment. A long wasting disease could not have more deeply hollowed my cheeks; my complexion had become like bronze, the whites of my eyes like

saffron. If I lay down in hopes of a truce to the horribly fixed idea which pursued me, I found myself again before the image of Domenico, the priest, in the act of expediting me to the gallows. In fine, without a single ray of hope, infirm in body and mind, I invoked incessantly either an immediate death or the restoration of my liberty.

On the sixth day my strength failed me to rise from bed; yet not for this did I consent to take the remedies which the Prioress suggested. On the morrow the doctor was sent for. It was Doctor Sabini, a man of large heart, and, as I heard afterwards, a warm and noble lover of his country. When he heard from the Prioress the recital of my woes, and how I persisted in refusing all food—

"So much the better," he observed; "fasting will be serviceable rather than otherwise to her health. When the fever has left her we will make her eat."

He asked for pen and ink to write a prescription. I detained his hand.

"You lose your time," I said; "I am firmly resolved to take no remedy. You, if motives of humanity bring you here, I can welcome; but if you come to give me the aid of your art, I beg you will not come to me."

The morning of the eleventh day found me in a condition of extreme prostration. I could no longer lift my emaciated arm, and fainted when I attempted to raise my head from the pillow. My feebleness had

reached such a point, that, unable any longer to get out of bed, I was prevented from bolting the door, as was my custom.

Sabini, in order to save me, imagined a pardonable equivocation. The governor of the Ritiro was a Caracciolo, Prince of Cellamare, whose physician Sabini likewise was. More than once he had told me that he had spoken to the prince about me. One morning, then, he arrived, smiling and rubbing his hands.

"Cheer up, Signora," he said; "I bring you good news."

Making an effort, I turned towards him.

"Yesterday evening the prince represented your case warmly to the authorities, who are willing, as soon as you are convalescent, to let you out."

My heart began to beat with such violence that I do not know how I escaped syncope.

"Then I shall be let free?" I cried, making an effort to recover my breath, and extending my hand to him.

"For certain!" resumed he; "and therefore it is necessary for you to get up a little strength, since I don't wish you to scare the people. Quick, Signora Prioress; make them bring some broth."

A moment afterwards the servant brought me some, which the physician himself, supporting me with pillows, made me take by spoonfuls.

At the third spoonful my sight became dim, and

before I could replace myself on the pillow I had rejected that most slender and meagre substance.

"Let us leave her to repose," said Sabini; "the prostration has got too much ahead. I will now prescribe her a calming potion, which you will give her every half-hour."

I had allowed myself to swallow the bait. The words of the medical man had reanimated me more than the broth and the prescription. The day following I was better; the apparitions still continued to appal me, the effect of the mental disturbance; but hope—that supreme specific—what relief does it not bring to the despairing! After four days the improvement was great. On the 6th Sabini made inquiries for me at the Parlatorio, but did not come up. By the end of the week I began little by little to take food; but in the mean time Sabini did not make his appearance. Complaining of this to the Prioress, I procured his recall.

He came finally. When he had received the account of my health, I asked him when my permission to get out would be communicated to me. He replied evasively; he would not take away the hope of my redemption, and said he could not fix the precise moment. . . . . Alas! in a short time I acquired the bitter consciousness of having been compassionately deceived.

I wept as woman has never yet wept. I abandoned myself again to the most boundless despair. I knew not what desperate means to have recourse to; but I no longer possessed the courage to cut short my wretched existence by starvation.

In this interval my mother had returned from Gaeta. Informed by my sister that my letters underwent in the parlour a similar fate to that which the public correspondence underwent in all the post-offices of the kingdom, she gave me an account of her mode of proceeding in terms totally unintelligible. The imbroglio, however, did not discourage me; knowing her proud and resolute character, could I think that after receiving such an affront she was the woman to sit down quietly under it?

In one of my lucid intervals, and these became more frequent now, I asked of the Prioress who would take the charge of my washing. She answered me that her servants had not time for this. I therefore made up a bundle of this to send it to my mother's house, taking care to knot up in a corner of a pocket-handkerchief a note, in which I asked an account of that which she had done for me.

The clothes were returned three days afterwards, and in the same manner I received an answer. My mother wrote that she had had an audience with the king, and also with the queen; both had given her the answer that she should address herself to the Car-

dinal Archbishop, as their Majesties were not in the habit of interfering in religious matters — they deeming that playing on the organ or chanting vespers was employment more suitable to a nun than conspiring openly with the enemies of the throne and the altar.

There was no longer doubt now; there was not one, but two of the local powers in pursuit of me—the police and the archiepiscopal.

To say the truth, the suspicions of the Bourbon police were not altogether unfounded. Nature having allotted to me warm feelings, a mobile imagination, a will powerful enough to struggle against the seductions of sentiment and the tide of habit, I had looked forward to the restoration of liberty to my native soil before, even before the Roman history, and the annals of our republics, had initiated me in her destinies. Books, papers, the association with men of vigorous intellect, above all the admirable example of other nations, advanced beyond us in the career of civilization, caused that sacred love of country to burn up within me. From that point commenced my execration of the imperial eagle and its petty satellite princes, the demoralization of our priesthood, the subservient courtiership of our barons, with that hatred, that inexorable hatred, which the Spaniard bears to the Moor, the Greek to the Turk, the Pole to the Russian, and the whole of Christendom to the Barbaresque privateer.

Nor did I, ambitious to join the apostolate of so noble a mission, cease from thenceforth to seek, under cover of the cowl, that occult centre of operations which might better bring into exercise my powers of working. I knocked for long, and heard no response—finally the door was opened to me. Then came those moments of exaltation and enthusiasm during which I had the arrogance to believe that, if every woman would think and feel as I did, not a single barbaric enemy would have descended into Italy; or at least that Italy would have long ago cast off the devastating yoke of tyranny.

The suspicions of the police, then, were not without some foundation; but who had put them on my track? I know not, nor does it concern me to know. However it was, I lost every hope of seeing the light again.

Superadded to these uncomfortable reflections was another of a still more irritating nature. Having resisted the reiterated orders of the Curia to assume the monastic habit, I received a peremptory command to resume the scapulary within three days, under the alternative of seeing myself confined in a provincial retreat, and passing the rest of my life in hopeless separation from my relations and the world.

Must I again put on that odious badge of sloth, of ignorance, and selfishness raised to the dignity of a profession? To fall back for ever, and without hope of ransom, under the rod of an ignorant and bigoted

abbess—bury, in the rottenness of a walled and grated cloister, the voice of reason, of heart, and of will! At this horrible thought my poor mind, already shaken to its centre, received its last blow.

It was the night of the 16th of July, an hour before midnight. After having knelt at the foot of my bed and offered up the prayer of the dying to the Divine mercy, I wrote a last letter to my mother, a letter of deep affection, and bathed with my tears.

I said: "Ah! none can believe in the immensity of my sufferings who have not partaken of them. To exist and to believe you are dreaming; that endless struggle to surmount the billow which overwhelms and is annihilating you, without a hope to reach the brink; that living burial, that waking to the sensation of being nailed within the darkness of the bier. Oh, mother! believe me these are horrible sufferings! Dear mother, this life which you gave me, only for me a state of torment,—of what value is existence if it is deprived of liberty, of conscience; if it is condemned to atrophy, whilst the other creatures of God breathe their native element free, prosperous, and healthy as the birds of the air? Be, then, the first to pardon me and defend my memory, when the only trace which I leave to the world of myself will be your commiseration."

I have mentioned that in a corner of my trunk some objects were concealed which escaped the search of the priests. These were a bundle of revolutionary papers

in cipher, a dagger, and a pistol, objects belonging to one of my brothers-in-law, and consigned by him to my care at the time I was in the Conservatorio of Constantinople.

Having finished the letter, which, all wet with tears, I laid open on the table, I opened the trunk, drew forth the stiletto, and plunged it in my side.

Oh, you who read! do not condemn me, pity me; bear in mind my sufferings; put yourself in my unhappy state, and weep with me, who, even as I write of this horrible moment, feel myself profoundly moved. Ah, yes! I had so suffered that the light of reason had gone out. Forgive me, reader; as I hope God has forgiven me.

But it was not written that I was to die in a paroxysm of frenzy—a suicide. I lived, I wept, I suffered still; and, praise to the Divine mercy, I survived that era of ignominy and servitude.

The agitation I had gone through had so weakened and unnerved me, that my trembling hand gave little force to the blow; a piece of whalebone in my dress caused the stiletto to glance off, and without penetrating merely lacerated the skin. But the cold steel sent a thrill of horror through me, and the blood which I lost (though the wound was slight) brought me to my senses.

Is not the instinct of self-preservation also part of

the Divine law? The internal voice which cries to the desperate, "Preserve thyself!" may it not be that of some guardian angel sent by Heaven?

The weapon fell from my hand, and I sank trembling on a chair.

The priests, not satisfied with having cowled me anew, wished also to fix on me a confessor, a religieux of their own selection and confidence, the Father Quaranta, an Augustinian. As it was an affair of a lost soul, whose conversion would not fail to be ascribed to miracle, they chose him as one who, having risen into high reputation for irresistible eloquence, and in odour of sanctity, would easily have overcome any resistance. I was determined I would not go into the confessional. Quaranta was therefore conducted to my room every day in spite of me, and at indeterminate hours.

He was a little old man, whose memory was quite gone, driving full sail towards dotage. He was so much taken up with the devotional ardour with which he made his recitations in a run like a musical snuff-box that he forgot my objections from one moment to the other. I protested against this annoyance. I was answered that I could not be exempt from the daily catechising of the confessor: they would, however send me a certain Cutillo, who enjoyed the same eputation as Quaranta.

"Since you cry him up so much, you can keep him for yourselves!" I answered the Superior. "If I must confess, it will be to one of my own and not your choice."

The priest bit his lip.

The Prioress had spoken to me of an old canon in the neighbourhood who frequently came to say mass in the church of the Ritiro, and at each time made inquiries for both my moral and bodily health, and would compassionately recommend me to the kind offices of the Prioress. I knew him by reputation for a learned and prudent man, and of unimpeachable probity. I begged the Prioress then to call him for the purpose of confessing me. He sent for answer that he accepted the duty, provided I had no intention of availing myself of his mediation with the Superior of the Neapolitan Church.

I let him know that it was far from my thoughts to humble myself before that Superior. He came.

But the choice of this eminent man was disapproved of by his Eminence as well as by the ecclesiastical Superior of the establishment, and for this reason,—the Canon was a Christian in heart and conscience; he was a minister in the service of suffering humanity, and not the tool of a ferocious caste. They, on the other hand, were far his inferiors as well in purity of life as in talent and learning. It followed, then,

that the conduct of the superiors being diametrically in opposition to the sentiments of the subaltern, the first would have in vain attempted to penetrate into the heart of the penitent through means of the latter. Only, ashamed themselves of a disapproval which nothing could justify, they were constrained to recall him: and for that reason I experienced through the sincere consolations bestowed on me by that good man the proof that Heaven had not entirely withdrawn its clemency from me.

But, I repeat, one misfortune brings another.

General Saluzzi, who had on so many occasions given me proofs of an almost paternal affection, was, after these last events, so severely reprimanded for protecting a nun who was conspiring against the Prince and rebelling against the will of the Church, that he dared no longer call himself my friend. Besides this loss, I experienced another which caused me no little mortification,—the King suspended my annual allowance of sixty ducats, the only means of support left to me. From that time, notwithstanding the help my family gave me, I suffered great privations. Being obliged to do everything for myself, and not being accustomed to those acts of servitude, for a whole summer I contented myself with bread and a little fruit, with the exception of Sunday, when I allowed myself a little meat. For the first six months my

solitude was unbroken, with the exception of a few visits at first from my doctor; for that whole period I saw no other human face but those, most unwelcome, of priests, monks, and nuns. I therefore shut myself up in my own room, and remained completely isolated. One only means I had of communicating with the outer world: this was the bag which contained my washing, and by means of this valuable messenger and confidant I kept up a correspondence with my mother.

With the aid of a few chosen books what weary hours would have been spared, what sadness dissipated, what moments of mute terror banished! Deprived of that harmless solace, I was driven to the literature with which Mondragone was furnished, and I do not regret having had recourse to it, for there I found the 'Vita delle Sante Martiri,' a most interesting book, which I read and re-read, and always with delight and instruction. The chaste poesy, the pure and holy zeal of that Christian era softened and calmed me. Admirable age! in which woman, elevated by ardent faith by hope, by charity, not only disputed with man his privilege of heroism, but by the sacrifice of her youth, her beauty, her substance, and her own existence, by the practice of every virtue, knew how to eclipse the learning of schools and the lucubrations of theologians! And who can deny that one of the most wonderful prodigies of Christianity was this new devotion of

woman to the reform of society and to the elevation of human nature? And this faith, this self-denial, which draws woman forth from the gynæceum to lead her all glorious to the stake, is it not more worthy of admiration than that heroism through favour of which the names of Epaminondas and Scipio are celebrated in the pages of Pluturch? I would that our maidens would turn daily and nightly to these for example. What might not the woman of our own day dare, if, taking that faith as her model, she laid as an offering of first fruits the flower of her affection upon the altar of her country! Instead of writing romances which enervate our mind with ephemeral emotions, sapping its strength with effeminate sentiments, and rendering sterile all our aspirations, let her try rather to invigorate the heart with fruitful thoughts and virile sentiments. It is thus that you will awaken from the slothfulness in which you lie; it is thus that you will prepare yourselves to share in the great work of civilization!

But let me resume the thread of my narrative.

For some time our clandestine correspondence proceeded with regularity. I found in the handkerchief a despatch of the following import:—

"Try to obtain an interview with the Apostolic Nuncio; he is a man of honour; you can do it by letter, which you will send through me." The interview was asked for and granted at once. The Nuncio

came to Mondragone the moment he had received my letter.

On the announcement of a visit from so eminent a functionary of the Holy See, the whole Ritiro was in excitement. The Prioress, who had a propensity for arrogating to herself all visits of distinction, ran in all haste to the parlour. But what was her astonishment when she heard that the minister of the high Pontiff asked for her prisoner? In her embarrassment as to whether she should allow me to descend to the parlour, or rather respect the prohibition of it, the poor woman stood petrified, and did not know what to reply to the functionary. I, who was waiting in expectation of that visit, the moment I perceived an unusual commotion through the passages, darted out of my room and rushed down the stairs, knocking against the nuns, who looked at me in bewilderment. I rapidly passed into the parlour, saying to the Prioress, in a high tone—

"Your concerns require you elsewhere. I request you to leave me alone with his Excellency."

Utterly confused, she retired, after an obeisance to the Nuncio, calling him "Signor Dottore," and muttered, as she turned away, "She is gone mad again for a certainty!"

The Nuncio was a man in the prime of life, and of most polished manners. He expressed the utmost astonishment at the recital of my Odyssey, but, not pos-

sessing any direct jurisdiction over the Ritiro, he expressed sincere regret not to be able to afford me the aid which my sufferings were entitled to. Notwithstanding he did not take his leave without first assuring me that he would put in motion every means to obtain for me, if not an immediate release, at least a diminution of the rigours of my confinement. As I reascended the stairs, I saw the Prioress in a state of consternation, and in consultation with her nuns. I approached the group.

"Do not give yourself any uneasiness about what has happened," I said; "you can send to inform the Cardinal that I broke my arrest myself."

This tone of mockery was nothing new to the Prioress. I had been in the habit for a long time of treating them with ridicule, for I recollected the saying of that baggage at Capua, "Only be ill-behaved, and you will get your husband."

The Prioress announced the infraction to the Superior priest, and he was the first who mounted up to me, snorting fire and flame.

I received him seated and laughing.

"How have you dared to descend to the parlour, notwithstanding the orders of the Archbishop? Do you know, you refractory woman, that, having taken the vows, you are bound to give blind obedience to your superiors?"

"In what Evangelist is it written that our Lord has

given me for Superior the Reverend Don Pietro Calandrelli?"

"I am your Superior in the name of the holy Catholic Church."

"What do you imply by the holy Catholic Church?"

"I imply the mistress of kings, the representative of God upon earth. I mean the Holy See, and the whole of Catholicism which obeys it."

"With your permission, I do not believe in the Holy See."

"Then you are not a Catholic."

"If that which you call Catholicism, which in the hands of pope, cardinals, and other priests is no other than a trade, a machine to produce ignorance and servitude, I for certain would not be Catholic."

"What would you be then?"

"A Christian—and somewhat of a gainer."

"How horrible! how horrible!" he cried. "Is it possible you are a Protestant?"

"A Schismatic!" chimed in the Prioress.

"Neither one nor the other," I resumed. "I would be a Christian of that sect which is in favour of the civilization, the happiness, and welfare of the people. That is my confession of faith, which will be the creed too of future generations."

"You are an impious, a sacrilegious woman. Prioress, I recommend you to look well that the con-

tagion of such Satanic opinions may not infect the innocent minds of your Ritiro."

"You need have no fear," I added; "a few years more, and these young minds will have discovered and learned to abhor your impostures as I have."

We were, however, still far distant from such a consummation. The Ritiro was composed almost entirely of young women so nursed in bigotry, and so bare of all good instruction, that they hardly knew how to write. And how could it be otherwise, when Calandrelli was the colleague of the notorious Monsignore Francesco Saverio Apuzzo? These adolescents every time they passed my door would repeat with a sigh of unction—

"Madonna delle Grazie, save her soul—turn her heart!"

The Superior in the mean time went hunting about to discover by what means I had been able to transmit my letter to the Nuncio. One by one the lay-sisters were interrogated, but nothing was elicited. At last the bundle for the wash excited some suspicion, and the inquisitor, setting aside every sense of decency, ordered the Prioress to inform him the first time that my clothes were to be sent home. Of course this was done, and this Cavaliere of the Order of Francesco I., kneeling on one knee on the floor, had the effrontery to untie with his own hand the bundle, and to

spread out separately each article of my soiled clothing.

But I, who was prepared for this perquisition, had taken care to lay a trap for him. In the corner of a pocket-handkerchief his Reverence found a letter addressed to my mother.

Chuckling with delight, he got up, and with a hand trembling with impatience unfolded the "corpus delecti."

"At last we've got the rat in the trap!" said he to the Prioress, and commenced reading it aloud.

At the fourth line he turned pale; when half-way through, his voice died away, and his eyes only continued the reading.

In that paper I had written every infamy I knew of him. I called him a drunkard, a shameless priest, a seducer, a rude brute; and amongst other things I mentioned the fact that he was in the habit of coming every day after dinner in a state of intoxication, and would summon now one and then another of the nuns into his own room, and would remain there for a considerable space *tête-à-tête* under the pretext of her helping him to recite his Offices.

The letter was furiously torn in pieces; and on the morning after this farce the Prioress came to tell me how his Eminence, at the instance of the Nuncio, desirous that I should participate in the effect of his inexhaustible clemency, extended to me the permission

to go down to the parlour, and to deliver my letters sealed into the hands of my mother's footman. In the mean time my excellent confessor did not fail to visit me two or three times a week. I conferred with, or rather disputed at full length with him the principal points of ecclesiastical discipline, and concerning the degree of respect which the present age should bestow on the authority of the past. He required amongst other things that I should not only forget the offences of my enemies, but that I should moreover love them with sincerity, and become one of them. It being now no longer in my power to pass the abyss which separated me from monachism, he refused to give me absolution, as well as administer the Sacrament.

About this time I again entertained the idea of writing to Rome; and this friend, who did everything to calm me, undertook that my application should reach its destination with certainty. On obtaining this promise, I penned a fresh petition; in which I requested directly of his Holiness one of two things—either secularisation, or the permission to go in person to lay my reasons before the pontiff.

I did not receive an answer until after months of waiting, and what an answer! The holy father neither granted me the permission to betake myself to Rome, nor the indulgence of secularisation. The utmost he condescended to permit me was a dispensation for the future from the confinement of the cloister.

This last concession gave me at least the hope to get out in the same manner as I did when in the Conservatorio di Costantinopoli. I therefore sent to demand of the archbishop from what day it would be allowable for me to go out during the morning.

"I cannot permit it," was his reply. "It is a ritiro for others, but a cloister for her."

At this answer I had no longer command of myself. Two years and a half had elapsed since my entrance into that den. I arranged a plan for flight, taking England or America as my goal. In either one or the other of these free lands I should have found brothers and companions in exile; my wishes gave the preference to that which contained the ashes of Foscolo.

The portress, at a very early hour in the morning, was in the habit of going down to open the street door, and, then returning, would shut the one above, thus leaving the intervening staircase deserted during this act. About half-way down this stair stood the doors of the parlours. I could have followed close behind the portress without her being aware of this, and, whilst she was occupied in opening the large door, I could have concealed myself in one of the parlours; having taken the precaution to deposit before daylight a bonnet with a thick veil, and a shawl, in the drum which was there. When the portress came up again, I should be thus shut out; and having stripped off my tunic,

should appear in a coloured dress, already put on for this purpose—the bonnet and shawl would have completed the disguise. A lady of my acquaintance would have waited for me in a neighbouring street, called the Rampe di Brancaccio. From the Piazza del Vasto a carriage would have taken me to the Molo, and thence I could have embarked without delay on board an English vessel which lay in the harbour. My project, easy of execution, was a secret to all, with the exception of the lady above-mentioned, who, after she had escorted me on board, would have returned to my mother with a letter from me.

But esteeming my worthy confessor to be a man incapable of betraying a secret, I desired to impart to him the resolution I had taken, so that he might know how to act after my flight.

My plan displeased him, and he condemned it as both imprudent and hazardous.

"No," said he, "you, a woman, and still young, and a nun, you should not expatriate yourself, to find refuge in distant lands, without means of existence, without guide or protection; your enemies would triumph at this. Remain, my daughter, and listen to the counsel of an old man who takes the deepest interest in you."

These accents went deep into my heart, as those of a minister estimable for wisdom and of rare probity.

"But, my father," I answered, "reflect that you speak to a dying woman who wants but extreme

unction. Do I say, to a dying woman?—it is to a corpse!"

"Any other means let us try, but not this."

"And what?"

"Why not rather commission some relative to go to Rome, who may plead for you?"

Discouraged from my fixed design, this one was not to be rejected, the rather as there always remained for me the alternative of flight: but to what relative could I entrust such an office? And the necessary expenses? —God would provide them.

After long reflection, I remembered a maternal aunt who had been brought up in Bologna, a woman endowed with singular energy, who would, better than any one else, have assumed such a charge. My aunt accepted it willingly; my mother and sisters provided the necessary expenses, and I gave her copies of all the papers I was in possession of, all obtained hitherto in vain, and, in addition, the certificate of the two physicians of the Comunità of Mondragone, which, if it be not displeasing to the reader, I will here transcribe, that he may be made aware of both the moral and physical condition I was in at that time.

"In the month of June, 1851, we, the undersigned, were honored with the request of the Communità of the Royal 'Ritiro' of Mondragone, to visit the noble lady Donna Henrietta Caracciolo di Forino, suffering under the attacks of nervous disease. We considered it our

duty to submit her state and case to the strictest investigation, observing and collecting with all possible diligence all the necessary indications which precede and accompany these convulsive attacks. After seeing the patient on several occasions, we were enabled to observe that these nervous disturbances have for their centre the cerebral system, a violent pain in the head being the first manifestation, succeeded by rigors invading the whole person. Then ensue frightful and most painful spasms, not only of the superior articulations (those of the neck principally), but likewise those of the inferior extremities, all these being contorted in a thousand extravagant forms, so that the assistance of several strong persons is required to retain her during an access, in order to avoid disastrous consequences from the violence of these fits.

"On one occasion during our morning visit, the patient was suddenly seized with one of these convulsive attacks, which was so violent and of such long duration that fears were entertained of a fatal termination to it; the pulse having become imperceptible, indicating a total stoppage of the heart's action; a deadly pallor and coldness of the entire body, and deglutition altogether impeded.

"The excellent Prioress and other religieuses were present at the same time during this sad spectacle. The duration of these convulsions is ordinarily from three to four hours. They then pass off slowly, suc-

ceeded by delirium and violent contortions of the body, followed by a species of extasis.

"These attacks are frequently repeated, and always with the same phenomena as above described. Observing these, it was a natural inference to suspect that besides physical causes operating, there were likewise moral, which tended principally to keep up such a state of disease. We therefore, on one occasion, took the liberty of enquiring of the patient herself what were the mental preoccupations which seemed to afflict her so heavily? She confessed to us that her mind was in a state of violent and painful excitement, caused by her remaining shut up in a cloister, of which she expressed her abhorrence.

"In such distressing cases we, as well as many others of the leading professors of the capital, have used all that the healing art could do or suggest, but always fruitlessly. We must even admit that the sufferer, after the application of these expedients, has rather grown worse than improved. Then, in order to guard against the patient's passing into a still worse state—that of absolute insanity, with which she is threatened, as may be judged from her actual and incessant moody fits, the wildly-staring eyes, and the continual cerebral excitation—we think and believe, as do all others of our colleagues, that she should abandon the claustral life, it being one which tends essentially to foster and keep up that state of disease above described, which must

infallibly degenerate into one more disastrous still, as we have already said.

"This declaration has been penned with the most scrupulous conscientiousness, under the impression that it was our duty to narrate minutely all the sufferings of our patient, in order to avert a worse state for her.

(Signed) "PIETRO SABINI,
Consulting Physician of the Establishment.

"ALESSANDRO PARISI,
Physician to the Establishment.

"*Naples, 23rd January*, 1853."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A BRIEF RESPITE.

In the last week of January my aunt set out for Rome, and from her first letters I began to build fresh hopes. Matters progressed favourably; but who does not know of the intricate delays of the Courts of Rome, where to obtain even a preliminary audience requires often the waiting for many weeks or months?

In the following month of March my mother fell seriously ill of bronchitis. The information on her state, which I sent for twice each day, represented her as always getting worse. Most anxious to see her, and deeming myself exonerated from claustral severity, I hoped that in so urgent and painful a circumstance I should be allowed this indulgence. I sent to the Cardinal to ask it. He answered, with imperious curtness, "No!"

The Princess Ripa went to him to implore an act of humanity, which not only a chief of a Christian church, but the most fanatical mufti of Constantinople, would

have hastened to grant. The compassionate lady promised she would come and fetch me in her close carriage; that when I had received the last words of my dying parent, she herself would on that same day reconduct me to Mondragone. She entreated, she urged, and supplicated him in terms which moved all present; and concluded by saying that the daughter, herself ill, would die of anguish, without receiving the last blessing of her mother. His Eminence answered,—

"Let her die. She shall get out no more."

On the day following, the mediation of the Nuncio was joined to the solicitations of the Princess. He, by a spontaneous act of philanthropy, constituted himself a guarantee for my return to the Ritiro. His Eminence answered anew, "No."

My mother breathed her last with the grief of being unable to give a last embrace to the most afflicted of her daughters.

I wrote a letter to my aunt in Rome on the subject of this—a letter flooded with tears; which she, using address and tact, managed to put into the hands of several cardinals. The tone of deep affliction in which it was written made much impression on these dignitaries, who were all agreed that this harshness on the part of Riario was the result of nothing less than some personal matter.

Shortly afterwards, the above-cited declaration of the medical men was sent to him from Rome, with the

usual demand for his opinion. The answer was as usual negative; but, as my boat's sail had begun to catch the wind, it was intimated to him by some persons of that court who were favourable to me, that he himself should select a medical man in his own confidence to draw out another certificate. His report by this means was altogether annulled.

And yet this prelate was at that moment acquiring a marked popularity. During the prevalence of the cholera he made ostentatious pretence and profession of his sympathy for the sick, so that our credulous populace, disposed more than any other to put faith in the marvellous, pushed their admiration of him to the extent of attributing miracles to him. This charitable soul, this vessel of election, had only to extend his hand over the head of the stricken man to drive away the disease not only from his body but from his house likewise.

Riario then began to perceive that, from my having at last found some good protection in Rome, my good fortune had begun to rise; and, as it did not seem prudent for him to interpose other serious difficulties, he began to turn about—to temporise; but finally driven to straits, he decided that the certificate should be made either by Professor Ramaglia or Giardini.

The first begged to decline, the second came.

"I am ready to give not only one but an hundred such certificates as your adviser has made," said he,

after having subjected me to a long and minute examination. "The inhumanity of which you are the victim would rouse abhorrence even in a savage. If my certificate can procure you an alleviation of your sufferings, be assured of receiving that, and at once. The free air is as necessary to you as bread. Where do you desire to go?" And he stood with the pen in his hand.

To withdraw myself from the diocese of Riario, I proposed the baths of Castellamare, and the medical men approved the choice. On the same day I despatched the certificate to the archbishop, who, not knowing what he could do further, was constrained to forward it to Rome; not, however, without accompanying it with a letter from himself full of venomous doubts and insinuations.

The person in Rome who had taken up my case was in search of some point which would help him to bring my application to a happy conclusion. Now in reading this last epistle of the archbishop's frequently over, he observed a phrase in it which, from its ambiguity, aided him admirably in this. Riario, in expressing himself as having fears for my health (*salute*), meant the health of my soul. The answer took the opposite interpretation, or that of supposing that the cardinal meant the health of the body.

God then decreed that my tribulations should at last find a termination, and that a period of rest should

arise for me—a precursor to that of triumph. Three days after I had despatched the brief to the cardinal, and whilst I was working alone in my wretched habitation, a hurried knock was given on the door. A lay sister cried to me—

"The cardinal has come, and has sent for you—make haste!"

Then rushed into my mind all the vexations, the broken promises, the treacheries, the long oppression, the humiliating scene of the arrest. I felt inclined to send him away with the full measure of my resentment, but thought within myself, "It is too soon yet; one must use some policy with these hypocrites."

I found him in the saloon; I had not seen him for four years, he seemed to have aged ten years in that period. The powerful convulsions which had agitated Church and State in Italy had furrowed his brow with hieroglyphics—marks of premature senility. It was no longer the Riario of former times—it seemed but his shadow.

I advanced without kneeling to him. I sat down without asking the permission to do so.

"You keep the past in remembrance, and want to show your resentment," he said, with a forced smile. "I own to have acted unadvisedly occasionally, I am but a man (*homo sum*), and every man is liable to error."

After so many deceptions it would have been only

idiotcy to have allowed myself to be caught by this bait.

"It is only," I replied after a long silence, "only out of respect for your sacred calling, and because I wish to believe in your acknowledgment of error that I can consent to throw a veil over the past."

"Are you then irrevocably determined to quit the cloister where the solemn vows you took still recall you?"

"I obey the voice of God, which recalls me back to life."

"And, moreover, you determine to pass out of my jurisdiction—out of my diocese—I know you do. Do not do so, I entreat you: do not repudiate the house which received you at your birth; the father who reared you and still sustains you. Yes, you are my daughter; it is true you have been a trifle hardly dealt with, but rest assured that from this day forth I will treat you with all the tenderness and consideration of a loving father."

These words revealed to me the object of his visit. He could not endure that the world should see the affront he received in my being transferred from his jurisdiction. An adversary, humbled and repentant, excites our pity; but the same, only a mask of hypocritical mercilessness, rouses our smothered anger.

"Am I to trust," I cried with warmth, "am I to trust the promises, put faith in the guarantee of persons

who keep their word as you did to Father Spaccapietra, on the subject of my arrest?"

"When I promised you should not be arrested by sbirri, and reconducted to the cloister, you, my good lady, had not done that which you did afterwards. Who would have ever dreamt that you would have looked for secularisation? That you would have appeared in public places leaning on the arm of liberals inscribed on the black book?"

"I would wager that if you met me to-morrow in the Toledo, you would do the same."

"Matters now have taken a different turn; even if I wished, I could not."

"Say, rather, as the wolf did to the lamb, that I have troubled the water where your forefathers were used to slake their thirst. Ah! cardinal, when with the very symbol of our redemption in your hand, you trod an orphaned and helpless girl under foot, did you ever then think of your own last hour—the day of reckoning?"

"We will not speak of the past. I may have erred through bad counsel or weakness, but, in truth, you yourself are not free from having done wrong. You, who, under a nun's veil, wished to hide the infamous schemes of demagogues and republicans. But I repeat, let us mutually lay aside our rancours. From henceforth I will treat you with the most unvarying consideration."

"Your Eminence, I have known you through long and most cruel experience. For the future, if you desire it, I will even kiss your hand; but I cannot, in exchange for this, allow you to——"

That archtype of simulation would, I believe, have remained impassible to the most outrageous insult if he could only have entrapped me anew. He proposed to select another cloister for me incomparably more commodious than the present; to grant me permission to go out every day; to provide me with another and more liberal allowance. I cut him short, saying,—

"No, no, good father: you where you are, I here; every one at his post. Let us establish distinctly from this conference, which shall be the last, the part which is suitable to each. The plainer the terms, the better friends.

"I will come now and then to pay you a visit. You will permit me?"

"Do not dream of it," I said, in a determined tone. "Too long and too oppressive has your guardianship been to me. There are those who wish me to bring you to account for the past. This I will not do. But it is time, in returning peacefully to your see, that you have care for your own health far differently from that which you have had for that of your pupil. Return, monsignore, and get rid of that passion for intrigue and intolerance, which, in putting your reputation at hazard, daily undermines your authority."

The cardinal, observing now that to entrap me and secure me his nets had got too old and too full of rents, took up a corner of my scapulare, and said,—

" A last word. I hope when in Castellamere, you will reside in a ritiro."

" I will do that which shall seem fitting to my new bishop."

" I trust that you will wear a black veil."

" My mourning is not yet over: I will wear one."

He then rose, and, as he passed along, the nuns all threw themselves on their knees before him; one touching the hem of his purple; another, with the ends of her fingers, touched his hand, and then kissed her own; and each one strove before the other to receive his benediction.

When he had reached the last stair, he turned round to bestow a final benediction on the nuns. Observing me in the first row of these:—

" ' Lieta e festosa de mirarlo guiso.'

" Recite an 'Ave Maria' for me," he said, giving me a distinctive benediction.

" Requiem eternam," I answered.

Having opened a correspondence with the bishop of Castellamare, I begged him not to desire that I should enter a convent. As to going out, I informed him that a lady, a widow, who had been for eighteen years

a retirata in Mondragone, had promised to go out each time with me. The bishop gave his full assent.

As a last service, the cardinal prohibited my sisters from accompanying me, and wrote to the bishop to send some one to fetch me. So arbitrary did this exaction appear to the bishop himself, that he thus answered my sisters who had gone to Castellamare to confer with him—

"Humour him," said he. "Wait for your sister at Grenili, and, when she is passing, join her."

On the 4th November, 1854, after three years and four months of cruel imprisonment, I revisited the light of day.

A nun—one of those who live out of the convent, and are called "Monache de Casa," was sent by the bishop to accompany me; my own sisters and the old lady who accompanied me being deemed by Riario unfitted for this office.

What occurred? This nun, who suffered from a difficulty of breathing, came in an open, instead of a close carriage—terrible contravention of orders.

At Resina we met his Eminence by chance. Our coachman raised his hat, and, whilst the Cardinal was in the act of raising his hand for benediction, he remained with it thus elevated, in his astonishment at beholding me seated in a prohibited carriage.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SPIES.

RESTORED once more to the world of the living, every object appeared new to me — objects I had never hoped to behold again. I drew in the air in large draughts as if the minutes were counted during which I was to be allowed to enjoy it, and I felt a lively commotion at the aspect of the active, cheerful population which passed me. My painful reminiscences shrunk to an imperceptible point, even that ready to vanish altogether. My path seemed flanked by an immensity whose horizon far exceeded my expectations.

Counselled by the Bishop to avail myself of the country in my recovered liberty rather than the city, I replied that this was precisely my intention.

Panting for the free air, the light, space, untrammelled movement, I took my old woman every morning into the country, and, quitting the city, I climbed

upwards through the woody eminences of Castellamare. Nor did the inclemencies of the weather deter me: neither the rain which should fall in furious torrents along the sides of the mountains, nor the autumnal mists, when, sweeping over the forest and spanning the ravines, it would envelope me in its dense vortex. With my eye fixed upon a distant point of the horizon, I waited for the dispersion of the mist to find in the return of sunlight a fairer, a more splendid prospect, no longer circumscribed by enormous walls and bars of iron.

My hair in the mean time had begun to grow, having fallen for the first time under the scissors of San Gregorio, and having for the space of thirteen years been shorn like a sheep. In proportion as my tresses lengthened I seemed to gain ground in the status of personal independence, and it seemed to me a thousand years till they should arrive at their pristine honours, now that they were no longer subject to the servile state.

Another badge of bondage remained to me—the monastic dress. I had already laid it aside in the house, but it was necessary to find a means of getting rid of it outside and for ever. That dress not only humiliated me in my own estimation, but annoyed me, embarrassed me at every step. Every one turned round to look at me; some out of curiosity, some through offended bigotry, some attracted by the novelty, whilst I wished to pass on unobserved.

Resolved to make an end of this anomaly, one fine morning I betook myself to the Bishop.

"Monsignore," I said to him, "this dress is so great an annoyance to me, that, if you will not grant me liberty to leave it aside, I must expatriate myself to get rid of it."

"I advise you to keep it on you," replied the Bishop; then adding, with a smile, "If you will absolutely take it off, what need have you of asking my leave?"

Some days later I laid it aside, and he feigned not to be aware of it. One sole inheritance of the past, the symbol of my celibacy, had I retained—the black veil.

In the mean time the star of Italy was rising again in the firmament; small, it is true, but yet of satisfactory brilliancy. The Crimean war had given an opening to the prowess of Savoy's troops and to the political genius of Cammillo Cavour to raise Piedmont, the champion of the nationality and military strength of Italy, to the grade of a European power. A network of mysterious meshes now united Turin to the principal cities of the peninsula, and a mass of electric threads kept Italian patriotism in continual communication and activity. This feverish orgasm became more visible in Naples than elsewhere; in Naples, where the Bourbon dynasty, having violated the sanctity of treaties, found itself in a state of rebellion against its subjects, but fallen in credit with the rest of

the civilised world—and consequently virtually dispossessed since the year 1848. To the eyes of the majority, Naples presented an image of its formidable neighbour on the eve of one of its most tremendous convulsions which the annals of volcanos can record. Every revolutionary party (sad heritage of that confusion which the preceding changes had induced!), not excepting the Bourbon-clerical one, stood in breathless attention to the precursory symptoms of the crisis which was on the point of happening—attentive as the Arrotino of the Florentine tribune immersed in his observation of the conspiracy. Why was I tarrying inactively in Castellamare? Friends, lamenting my exile, wrote me letter upon letter. Thinking, then, that if I could find in Naples some little department suited to my powers, I would run every risk, every danger, provided I could add my most slender aid to the movement which was being organized.

After eleven months passed in inactivity in that district, I made a second visit to the Bishop.

"Monsignore," I asked him, "if they should drive you from your see, and send you into exile for the rest of your life, would you like it?"

"No one would like it," he replied, laughing; for he comprehended the drift of the question.

"Neither do I: and as I cannot stay separated for ever from my relations, I have resolved to return to Naples."

"And Riario? and the Government? and the Spies?"

"From my friends God will defend me—from my enemies I will keep myself."

A few days afterwards I hired a small apartment in the capital in a newly-built house opposite to the "Croce del Vasto," where I took up my residence, together with the widow lady. I took care, however, to retain a room at Castellamare as a place of refuge in case I was molested.

The remote position of my new lodging, the transformation effected by my dress, and the generous tolerance of the Bishop served to keep me a long time concealed from the curiosity of others; and the minute precautions which I took to protect my incognito would have still further prolonged my safety had not an unlooked for and most unhappy occurrence put Riario on the scent of my return.

The story above mine was occupied by a priest, whom I had frequently encountered on the stairs, but whose sinister aspect joined to the hateful garb he wore made me always avoid his look and his salute. One night in the month of February, at nine o'clock, I had left the widow's room to go to bed; a small anteroom divided mine from the door of entrance; close to this door was a lamp which gave light to the stairs, as the street was a deserted one, and the house without a porter. I heard two persons descend the stairs from

the story above, speaking together as if in altercation. They made a pause underneath the lamp. A fearful shriek and the sound as of a body falling turned my blood cold. This was followed by a faint voice crying "Villain! you have murdered me." At the same moment a hurried step reascended the stairs, and this was almost immediately followed by shrieks and cries in the story above mine. A window was then violently burst open on the side which overlooked the garden, and I distinctly heard the sound of a body precipitated to the ground. The old lady, her niece, and myself were in mute consternation; all the inmates of the house were in motion. When I heard the voices of those above, whom I knew to be respectable people, I seized a light and was proceeding to the door, and was horror-struck at perceiving a stream of blood issuing from beneath it, and into which I was on the point of treading. I recoiled; but a feeling of humanity gave me courage, and I thought of nothing but help for the wounded man—if even yet he could be helped. Opening the door, a sight of horror met my eyes. A young man lay extended on the ground close to my door—a deep and wide gash had laid open his side; with upturned eyes and close-set teeth he was in the act of breathing his last. I asked of those who had collected round him who he was—who had assassinated him; no one could answer either question. In the next moment from above stairs rushed the woman servant of

the priest, after freeing herself by violent struggles and shrieks from the hold of his sister, exclaiming,—

"I will stay no longer in this den of brigands. I will stay no longer."

As she came in sight of the murdered man she began to cry.

"Who had murdered him?" we asked her.

"The priest! the priest!"

We were petrified.

"Where is this wretch then?"

"He has thrown himself from the window above."

The unfortunate young man had married a sister of the priest some months previously. For the difference of thirty ducats in the maternal dower this miscreant had assassinated his brother-in-law. He had sent for him on that evening on the pretence of wishing to speak with him on business, and as they descended the stairs together the murderer dealt the unfortunate young man a deadly blow with a large knife as they stood under the lamp at my door. The villain thought to conceal his authorship of the crime by abstracting his watch, hoping to make it appear that thieves had assassinated his brother-in-law, but the agitation and confusion consequent upon the nefarious act caused him to forget to fling away the bloody weapon;—he re-entered his door, holding it unconsciously and lightly grasped in his murderous hand. The maid, who had run forward as she heard the cry on the stairs, at that

moment encountered him face to face thus armed, and pointing to the bloody witness in his hand, cried, "You have murdered him!"

Thunderstruck at seeing himself discovered, he had in the next moment broken open the window and precipitated himself thence. The horror which this assassination inspired had chained all to the spot, and no one had thought of going down to see whether this wretch was alive or dead until the arrival of the police. He was then found extended across a barrow which stood beneath the window, his legs and arms broken and his teeth beaten in, but still alive. He died on the following day in the prison of San Francisco.

The widow of the murdered man, upwards of six months advanced in pregnancy, became insane.

The old lady who was my companion, terrified by this tragedy, would now no longer live out of the convent, fearing that she should be always subjected to similar frights, leaving me with her niece. Therefore she shut herself up once more in a retiro, and I, having changed my residence, buried myself in another not less solitary quarter. But the priest's crime had put the police and the archbishop on my track.

To whom is not the penetration of the Bourbon police known, especially in matters of Liberalism?

"The kingdom of Naples," writes Victor Hugo, "possesses but one institution—the Police. Each district has its commission for the bastinado. Two sbirri,

Acossa and Manescalco, reign under the king. Acossa bastinadoes Naples; Manescalco, Sicily. But the stick is only a Turkish remedy, and the Neapolitan Government has added a cast of the office of the Inquisition to it—the torture—in this wise: an official, Bruno, holds the accused with his head tied between his legs until he confesses. Another sbirro, Pontello, puts him, seated, on a grating, and lights a fire beneath it. This is the 'sedia ardente.' Another familiar, Luigi Manescalco, relative of the above-mentioned chief, is the inventor of an instrument in which the arm or the leg of the patient is introduced, a screw is turned, and the member is fractured. This is the so-called 'Macchina angelica.' Another suspends a man by the arms from two rings in the wall, and thus by the feet in the opposite wall. This done, he jumps on the unhappy wretch, and dislocates some member. There are the 'manetie,' which dislocate the fingers; and an iron circlet, contracted by means of a screw, which is fixed round the head, and serves to force the eyes out of their place. Sometimes it has happened that there is an escape, as in the case of Casemirro Arsimano. But who would believe it?—his wife, his sons, his daughters, were arrested and placed upon the 'sedia ardente' in his stead. Cape Zafferano is bounded by desert sands; upon these sands sbirri bring sacks, and in these sacks are human beings. The sack is plunged into the water, and kept there until there are no more struggles; it is then

drawn out, and the man within is asked, 'Will you confess?' If he refuses, he is plunged in again. In this manner Giovanni Vienna, of Messina, died. At Monreale an old man and his daughter were suspected of patriotism. The old man died under the stick; his daughter, who was with child, was stripped naked, and made to die under it also. This takes place in the country of Tiberius."

This police, then, having taken note of the names of all the lodgers in the house where the murder occurred, did not fail to make known to the Cardinal both my return to Naples and my place of abode there. I then knew for a certainty that should I, by ill-luck, be taken, though I might escape the "sedia ardente," I should not avoid the bastinado. From that day the spies began to be put in movement like a swarm of bees—and it is known that this class is composed principally of priests and monks. Priests, with the air of police agents, buzzed unceasingly in the neighbourhood of my lodging, and began to dodge my steps everywhere, mute, never-failing, and inseparable from my shadow. Having learned after a while to recognise them, though disguised, I concerned myself little about them; but I was careful not to afford them any pretext to denounce me—a pretext they were evidently on the watch for—in my connexion with persons suspected of Liberalism; for as regarded myself alone, I had no fear of being persecuted. On the one hand, the permission

obtained from Rome to quit a place where I had been violently detained, on the other the change of jurisdiction, were two arguments suited to check the tyrannous interference of Riario. Nevertheless, having been advised to place spies again over these clerical and laical ones who besieged me, I did so, and with the happiest results.

By this means I managed not only to put myself in a state of defence, but even to enjoy an unmolested reception of my friends, and visiting certain houses marked with the black cross of the Commissary.

To cite an example of the method employed by me in eluding the vigilance of the spies, it will be enough to say that in six years I changed my residence eighteen times, and my servant-women thirty-two times.

This system of Bourbon espionage, of such monstrous proportions, garbed itself in a thousand different forms, and took a thousand guises, infecting the atmosphere of the sanctuary itself. Did I enter any church in the neighbourhood, the priests, out of breath, would assail me from the very door with questions, "Do you wish to confess?" I was no sooner fixed in any new abode than the neighbours were on the watch to run over to my maid with some tale or another; and the questions would then be,—"Is she a widow?" "Is she married?" "Why does she live alone?" "Why ain't she married?" "Who is her confessor?" "Has she a lover?" "Who are those who visited her this morn-

ing?" "Does she correspond with any one?" "Does she carry her letters to the post herself, or does she intrust them to you?"

The spy system would then operate in the following manner:—The maid-servant's communication went to the grocer, or to the apothecary or landlord, and often to the doctor of the neighbourhood; from these it was transmitted, under the seal of confession, to the rector, thence to the bishop, thence again it passed *ipso facto* to the commissary, from him to the cabinet of the king.

I once happened to have residing opposite to me an old maid, the most troublesome mosquito of the clerical maremma of Naples. Her house was from morning till night a perpetual coming and going of priests and friars of every description. She would lead them on to her balcony, whence she took a singular pleasure in pointing me out to them every time I came to the window. My maid was in her pay, and through this channel she had information of everything which occurred in my house. To free myself from the annoyances of this insect, which gave me neither peace nor truce, I was content to sacrifice three months of my term and seek an asylum in another direction. This change was still worse. I learned to my consternation that here my landlord was no less than a police agent himself. I had hardly known this when I wished to quit this habitation at

the risk of losing a second term; but it occurred to me that so precipitate a departure would only have tended to rouse the suspicions of the sbirro himself, and I chose the alternative of remaining. To the right and left of the same story which I occupied, two male sbirri were perpetually stationed; on the story beneath two sbirri of the other sex, sisters of the mistress of the house, gossiped and watched. Spies were at the keyhole of my door, on the stairs, in the yard, and on the terraces; in fine, an invasion of them everywhere. This hundred-eyed Argus, seeing that I never made a practice of confession, carried the information to the rector; and this man calling my servant into his room subjected her to a long and minute interrogatory, particularly with respect to the names and quality of the persons who frequented my house. I got clear out of this inquisition, as the maid affirmed she knew of none—this being the case, but it behoved me to change my servant again. I received during a long interval but a single scratch from the police. Some months after the death of Ferdinand II., I encountered in the neighbourhood of the museum a gentleman of my acquaintance, one not less distinguished for his patriotism than his learning. We spoke briefly of the aspect which affairs were taking under the imbecile sovereignty of Francis II., when looking cautiously round he drew from his pocket a letter, which he put into my hand. I concealed it within my dress, not

however without becoming aware that I had been observed by one of the police, who was dogging my steps, and consequently not without the certainty of being summoned on the morrow to render an account of this. Such was the case.

At an early hour the visit of one of Acossa's emissaries was announced; who, with consummate politeness, demanded of me when and where and through whom I had become acquainted with Signor G. B.? if he was in the habit of visiting me? what he had said to me the day previous in the street? &c. To all this I made, what appeared to him, satisfactory answers.

"And the paper which he put into your hands?" he finally asked, "will you have the kindness to favour me with it for a moment?"

"Here is the very thing," I replied with promptness and an air of unconcern, and taking up a folded paper which lay for this purpose on my desk, I handed it to him with the same politeness he had used to me. It was a number of the 'Giornale di Napoli'!

On the morning of the 25th of June, 1860, the street corners in Naples were crowded with people of all classes occupied in reading a manifesto: it was the sovereign act by which the young Heliogabalus—hard pressed by the revolt of Sicily, by the victories of Garibaldi, by the threatening attitude of the capital and the continental provinces, by the invasory views (as they called them) of the House of Savoy, and by

the indifference of foreign cabinets—promised to his subjects, representative, Italian, and national institutions, and a league with the King of Sardinia; accepted the tricolor, and led to the expectation of analogous constitutional institutions for Sicily.

When they had read this, all shrugged their shoulders with an air of compassion.

"What does it say?" I asked my companion, who had made his way amongst the crowd to read the manifesto.

"It is the will," he answered, "of a tradesman, who is bankrupt for the fifth time."

It was thus it was denominated by the central committee of Naples, which, in a proclamation on the same day, told the Neapolitans: "Any apparent concession whatever, forced by the urgency of the time, and intended to retard the full and entire completion of the national idea, will be received with contempt."

CHAPTER XXV.

LIBERTY.

WHILST in the sole "word of order," "Italia una," the aspirations of twenty ages and the predictions of profound thinkers met from one extremity of the peninsula to the other, whilst the heroic Captain of the Thousand performed acts of prodigious valour, a voice more thundering than the bombardment of a despot, the voice of a poet, whom genius, warm love of liberty and long exile, has admitted to the citizenship of all nations—a prophetic voice, raised the hymn of glory to regenerate Italy.

"The graves are unclosed—from tomb to tomb the cry is, 'Arise!' It is more than life—it is an Apotheosis. O, the heart-throb is divine, when he who was humbled is roused to indignation, he that was fallen is risen again; when brilliant and terrible re-appear the eclipsed splendours of many ages, when Stamboul is once again Byzantium, when Setinum is become Athens, when Rome is Rome again!

"Let us all applaud Italy, let us glorify this land of great productions — Alma parens. Here certain abstract dogmas take real forms, become visible, palpable. This nation is virgin in honour—a mother from her inexhaustible fruitfulness. Ye who listen to me, can ye conceive this magical vision,— Italy free! free from the Gulf of Taranto, to the lagunes of San Marco? For upon thy tomb, O Manin, I swear it, Venice shall share in the festivity. Say, do ye picture to yourselves this vision, which to-morrow shall be reality? It is finished! Falsehood, simulation, ashes, night, all have vanished! Italy lives! Italy is Italy!

"Yes; that which was but a geographical expression, is a nation; where there was a corpse, there is now a soul; where crouched a spectre, stands an archangel, the radiant cherubim of Christian civilisation. Liberty upstanding, with unfurled pinions. Italy, the mighty dead, is come to life again. Look on her in wonder. She arises, and says to Greece, I am thy daughter; to France, I am thy mother.

"A sovereign state. She has around her her poets, her orators, her artists, her philosophers, her great citizens, all those councillors of humanity, those conscript fathers of the world's intelligence, all those members of the senate of ages; and on the right and on the left, those two names of terrible eminence, Dante and Michael Angelo. What a triumph—what

an event—what marvellous phenomenon—the most majestic of accomplished arts—the unity which with one ray illuminates that magnificent Pleiades of sister cities—Milan, Turin, Genoa, Florence, Bologna, Pisa, Siena, Parma, Palermo, Messina, Naples, Verona, Venice, Rome!

"Italy arises! behold, she walks, *incessu patuit dea*; she shines, exulting in her genius; she communicates the great fever of progress to the world entire; and Europe starts—is electrified by this portentous light. There is not less ecstacy in the eye of the people, less sublime radiance upon their foreheads, less admiration, less joy and transport for this new light upon earth, than for the apparition of a new planet in the firmament!"

Educated in the perfidious school of his ancestors, Francis II., the opprobrium of our age, hoped in the mean time to make a plaything, according to his whim, both of his subjects and of the remainder of Italy and Europe, until he could succeed in bringing back the Austrian bayonets. With eyes shut to the irresistible stream of love which every day more and more impeded his steps; equally deaf to the counsels of a wise relative as to the subterranean thunders which muttered beneath his very throne, he would only place his dependence upon the litanies of the priests, and on the traditional ignorance of the populace. But the days of Fra Diavolus, of Ruffis, of Maria Carolina,

of Actons, the days of Germans were now over. Now the corpse of Caracciolo came from the bottom of the sea, afloat upon the surface, and from the gibbet of Pagano to that of Bandiera, along the road of expiation, sprinkled with the purest blood of Italy, resounding with only one cry—Death to the Bourbons!—Long live the Prince who will extend his hand to the nation!

At last the great decrees of Providence were consummated: the presentiment of so many ages took form and motion in one of the most signal coups d'état. The last monarch of the Capets was on the point of disappearing from the scene, like a shadow at the break of day. Whilst the white-cross standard of Savoy—the emblem of independence and unity—inaugurated the reign of national conscience, hoisted upon almost every eminence of the Peninsula.

I know a composition which expresses with admirable fidelity, and unites with admirable conciseness, the sentiments of the people of Naples and of Sicily at the moment when the scion of the Ferdinands was embarking for Gaeta. It is the farewell which a veteran emigrant sends to the Bourbon in epistolatory form, in the name of the Italians of the south. I believe I shall gratify the reader in giving this letter uncurtailed. Its merit will compensate for its length. It is this:—

"SIRE,—Whilst your enemies fling after you a parting malediction, and your friends their contempt, permit

a patriot to speed you with an adieu which you have never yet heard—the truth, which posterity will speak, and which courtiers ever conceal.

"The Battle of Velletri gave your ancestors a throne; the conquest of Reggio took it from them. Between these two events lies a period of 126 years. Let us balance the account you leave. There is no history of a people which offers such a spectacle as that of Naples. 126 years of existence have been 126 years of almost permanent insurrection. 126 years of reigning, a moral expropriation of the manhood and the intelligence of this people. The primary care of your first ancestor was to fence off these provinces in the autonomy of a state—Italians under Spanish domination; and he made us Neapolitans. We were of one family with Milan, with Parma, with Sicily, rescued from evil rule, and raging against such rule. Carlo III. separated us; and the day on which the great voice of France of '89 called peoples and princes to the examination of their titles, this family, united by the same chain, by the same griefs, the same misery, found itself scattered and isolated as individuals. We were like the ancient states of France, which a common danger and a common law bound into a nation. Your great grandfather made a capuchined Germany of Italy: an original sin, which no baptism of blood or tears has yet availed to cancel. King Ferdinand consummated the work of isolation. He did more. He embroiled

himself stupidly in coalitions against France, and twice occasioned foreign occupation; threw beyond redemption the kingdom into the desperate fortunes of Austria, and took our men, our money, and our navy—a consideration for retaliation. He deprived us of liberty, and denied us every right of man; and when we did open our eyes to that sun with which France lit the world, King Ferdinand reddened our soil with bloody scaffolds, as a variety to his pastimes. He sold us to the English after having made us bow the knee to Austria. He ran away, and he robbed us, robbed us like a common thief, superadding the insult, 'that he need leave us nothing but our eyes to weep withal.' He stole the deposits from banks; he robbed the 'Monts de Pieta;' he burnt the shipping; gutted the royal residences; he calumniated us then on his return from an ignominious exile; put to death all he could; all that was good; exterminated all who dared to think or to feel nobly, as many as honoured Italy and whose hearts throbbed for Italy. Darkness began to spread over the kingdom. When the French Republic, the Directory, and the First Consul, threw about with full hands victorious laws, institutes, liberty, administrative organization, and struck at the Caliph of Rome, saying to him 'Thou art a priest, thou canst not be a king,'—then he, the mock king, began the work of demolition of all that was good which France brought us, sparing only the onerous system of imposts. Then when we

constituted our liberties, he perjured himself and consigned us, bound hand and foot, to Austria, inundated the realm with German soldiery, and made us the sack and pillage of the German bayonet. Then he placed on our necks the implacable yoke of concordats; he contaminated us with friars and priests; created a police, which absorbed the whole kingdom, and made of it a nefarious and ensanguined changeling; he leased us as a property to a handful of infamous and ribald courtiers.

"Sardanapalus passed away. What remained of him, what step had he taken to put this people in the path of progress, beyond the cutting off his own pigtail (*queue*)? what liberal institution remains to us in heritage of the great commotion of the French Revolution, except the preservation of the funds and a standing army? What benefit did he leave us, except the fathers of the Society of Jesus, and a Canosa as minister? He took all from us, and bequeathed us Francesco, together with the hatred, hardly yet appeased, which divides the Neapolitan from the Sicilian. Sire, tell us for what we should be thankful, for what we should be mindful and grateful, in the reign of Ferdinand I. Haply for so many acts of contempt of blood, of defamation. Perhaps for the prisons which he left full, or the banishments which saw so many of the greatest of Italy's sons perish. Perhaps for the 'white terror' which enveloped the kingdom like a

shroud, or the occupation of the Austrian army. Should we remember the public debt, the State Juntos, the supremacy of Rome, a doubled budget, the civil administration concentrated in the police, and a police whose name is Canosa. The Jesuit and the gendarme the first functionaries of State,—a triple censure upon the productions of intellect, the axiom 'De Deo pauca, de Rege nihil,' elevated to a State dogma, to a legal precept. Sire, is it for these that we should be grateful? Is it for this that we should respect in you the descendant of King "Nasone"?* Is it, perhaps, for this that you on your departure invoke the justice of God, the sanction of the people, that you appeal to diplomacy, to treaties, to history, to force, to reasons of State? Sire, are these the titles which consecrate you King of Naples, or do any of us perhaps forget them? Yes, we forget the orgies of Caroline, a Semiramis worthy of the Court of Assisi, the lover of Emma Leona. We forget the capitulation of Nelson—the rascalities of Cardinal Ruffo; we forget the financial operations of Medici; the jockeyship of the throne at the Congress of Vienna paid with six millions; the loans of Rothschild, the secret articles of the treaty of Laybach, and of that of Verona. Sire, shall we be ungrateful for these? Are these the titles which you invoke?

* In allusion to his enormous nose.

"And yet, Sire, the lazzaroni King seems to have been the best of your race. King Francesco was a terrible dawn of blood. Bosco reduced to beggary still cries for justice to God; the memory of De Matteis makes the Calabrias still shiver with horror; the traffickings of Viglia and De Simone still keep the eyes of the angel of modesty veiled; the catacombs of the Carbonari, the State scrutinies, the juntos of Maeri, of De Girola, of Janeh, make the hair of those stand on end who had then to see Mazza, Governa and Acossa. For five years five millions of men dared not respire for fear of revealing that they existed. The 'Society' enveloped the whole kingdom in its black gown, and said, 'I am the State!' The gendarme unlocks a gigantic manacle, and said, I hold you.

"King Francesco, in fine, was nothing else than an extinguisher, his Government an air-pump. Canosa extracted blood, Medici extracted gold. The others vied in stripping us of honour, of mind, of conscience, of moral life. Ruffo prostituted Naples at the feet of Austria, Tommali made justice venal, Nunziante and Pastore made the army so. Religion became an instrument of spiritual torture, and took the first place in the kingdom; the kingdom was the police.

"This posthumous Claudius, who lived on phantoms, remorse, perjuries, rancours, eternally athirst for blood and vengeance, since the insurrection of '20, impla-

cable as Sylla, a cold-blooded sanctimonious executioner, after five years, died. Whither did he go?

"He had inherited an almost endless population; he left but a corpse. He had found the Austrians—a temporary sore; he left us the Swiss, the ignominy of their own land, the enduring misery of ours. He had found the Muratists and Constitutionalists of '20; he left us the Canosini and the Liguoretti, the University gorged with priests, the treasury emptied by the journey into Spain; for military glory, the capitulation of Tripoli; for a decoration, the 'order of merit,' the recompense of spies and gaolers; the navy destroyed; Prince Metternich sovereign in reality. The public debt, which Ferdinand had found in 1815 at 94,000 ducats per annum, and which the parliament of 1820 had increased to 1,440,000 ducats, besides four millions and a half of floating debt, Francesco left at 3,190,850 ducats. The budget, which he found at twenty-three millions, he left at nearly twenty-seven millions—one million three hundred thousand ducats in pensions and remunerations for base and infamous services.

"We are willing to strain a point, Sire, not to appear pessimists—to find something which does honour to your house; and we find nothing but the unbridled licentiousness of Queen Isabella. We would willingly cite some trait by which it was endeared to the Neapolitans, revered by Italy; and we only find the executions of Cilento, the snare laid for the Capozzoli, the

journey to Rome to kiss the foot of Pius VII., and that to Milan to bow the knee before Metternich. Ah, Sire! do we forget any benefits beyond the change of Canosa into Tonti? Do we pass over any act of your race besides the three millions which we paid for the inconsistent mosque of San Francesco de Paola? What remained to our fathers of the kingdom of Francesco beyond an endless curse, a cry of terror and of horror?

"If to consolidate your right you have, Sire, other titles than that of 'dei gratia,' produce them. For the reason that the inheritance of your two first ancestors has not served to preserve the throne for you, whilst you are out of our power in the same way, it will not save your head if, when arrayed against us, you fall into our hands.

"And your father—has he, perchance, been a better specimen of the dynasty, better represented the nation, given a single step to our advancement? Has he rendered his subjects more esteemed in Europe, more prosperous and free within, more caressed in Italy? Ah, Sire! for one hundred and twenty-six years Naples has repeated the history of the old woman of Dionysius. Francesco made King Policenelli seem all that was just, liberal, and humane. King Bomba made us call again for King Cappio, and your majesty pays for them all.

"Ferdinand II.! and what can I tell your majesty

that Europe does not know? What man ever stood so deeply in the contempt and execration of mankind? He has rendered diplomacy itself cynical, which has held him cheap, and, as a malefactor, severely condemned him. Foreign parliaments covered him with insults from the very Chair; the public papers exhausted themselves in ignominious words. He was the Napoleon of Shame; and the people within in permanent insurrection. In 1830 it was Palermo; in '32 the conspiracy of Frate Angelo Peluto; '34 the conspiracy of Rossarole; '35 that of San Carlo, in which Orazio Mazza made the first essay in the character of denouncer; '37 was the submission of Sicily; in '38 that of Cosenza and of Aquila; in '41 Aquila anew; in '44 Cosenza afresh; in the same year the expedition of Bandiera in Calabria; in '46 Gerace, Reggio, Celento; in '48 the whole kingdom. No prince ever held for so long a period and so implacably the axe over the head of his people. After the proclamation of the statute he perjured himself; then the coup d'état of the 15th May; then an implacable struggle between people and king; and, above all this, the Medusa head of Austria; more terrific still than the king, more execrated than even the band Peccheneda, Mazza, Governa, and Acossa.

"Your ancestors, Sire, what were they but the Columbo of the sbirro type? Genius was required to create Canosa, Intonti, Delcaretto, Campagna. Re-

former of the Finances, Ferdinand finished by leaving a public debt of about 12,000,000 and a budget of 39,000,000, without making, like Victor Emanuel, railroads for the people and war for Italy. Reformer of the administration, Ferdinand produced Longobardo, Carafa, Acossa, De Liguori, and D'Urso. Ferdinand, Troya, and Murena, placed sbirri and spies in the episcopal sees, in the stewardships, in the tribunals, at the receipt of customs, in diplomatic posts everywhere —everywhere a spot of mire, a stain of blood, a perjurer, an idiot. As organiser of soldiery, Ferdinand drained the populace to the dregs that he might attain the hyperbolic flight of Velletri, and his army that of the discomfiture of Sicily, not of the Sicilians, and the dispersion of the Calabrian corps. An organiser of religion, Ferdinand invented a species of concordat of police, and had all the priesthood under arms; some to overturn the throne, some to consummate traitorous vespers against the nation. Christ in no place. Antonelli somewhere, and most generally hatred to Victor Emmanuel. To reign, and that not for a single day in peace; nay, shut into his Escurial at Gaeta, hated and hating. Ferdinand had to commit 897 political assassinations; shut up in prisons, 15,621 citizens; condemned to imprisonment 73,000; and kept under surveillance more than 200,000 between Naples and Sicily. In comparison with this man, the duke of Alba was an angel of peace.

"Ferdinand had bombs for no other use than to exterminate his subjects, no courteous words but for the enemies of Italy. Insolent in prosperity, and at the moment, and to the person with whom he could be so with impunity, pusillanimous at the instant when the danger had him by the throat. The United States demanded indemnities which were not due, and he paid them. England imposed leonine conditions in the matter of sulphur, and he signed them. Piedmont demanded the restitution of the Cagliari, and he made it. Talarico (even Talarico!) wished to come to terms of surrender, and he sent his minister to make terms with the brigand. No mortal ever kissed more foul hands of priests and friars than he. A king, he authorised his functionaries to rob, and shared with them the rapine; then he played the usurer like the duke of Modena, and joined himself to the plunderers to starve the realm. There is not in fine a single act in the life of your father which is not a reproach or a crime. He is a king of the negation of God.

"And after twenty-nine years of reign what remains of him? A surname—Bomba; and over and above your expulsion, Sire, the end of the Bourbon dynasty. In this land, a kiss of the Divinity, he made a Golgotha of the people. This people now rises erect, and like the angel of Milton cries 'Begone, ye race of Cain! be ye cursed, and cursed, and cursed!'

"You in the mean while proclaim yourself innocent;

you, in departing, implore compassion for your youth, for your understanding. Excuse us; if God cut you out for a block of wood, why persist in wishing to remain a king. In truth, you are equally guilty with all your abettors: nay, still more so than all of them. They sinned principally against their people; you sinned against Italy. If Austria still remains at Venice, the fault is yours. If the Pope still holds Rome, the fault is yours! . . . . . .

"Yes; you committed the greatest of all felonies against Italy and the Italians, when, upon the Lombard plains, French and Italian soldiers struggled against the eternal enemy of Italy, your soldiers were not there. If Italy had had the hundred thousand of her sons, which were in your command, Napoleon III. would not have consummated the great fault of Villafranca. You proclaim yourself innocent. Pardon us: you may be incapable. Innocent?—No! You are the Judas of Italy, and there is no compassion for you. And now what is your conduct at this moment? I will not sadden your last hour—the more so as your last attempt against the Neapolitan people and against Italy has failed. You would resist in Sicily, in the Calabrias, in the principalities, in the capital itself. Your sword broke in your hand. Now you would imitate the Duke of Modena in carrying off treasure, jewels, pictures, furnitures, and wanting to carry off troops and ships. Now you wish to try the hazard of a last resistance

between the Volturno and the Garigliano. That which you stole, like king Ferdinand I.,—what you heaped together of the drops of our blood, and which you turned into gold—keep it! And may God not call you to account for the poor man's mouthful of bread! But to deliver over to Austria our lives and our ships, to provoke new fratricidal struggles behind the fortresses of Capua and Gaeta—this is too much! Take heed, however, destiny plays sorry tricks, and the patience of the people can be exhausted. Did Louis XVI. ever believe that he would have been arrested half-way, and brought back on the road to the guillotine? James II., Charles X., Louis Philippe,—did they dream of passing their lives in exile? Gaeta is not impregnable, and if we take you there—

"Sire, to know how to fall is the most difficult act of all greatness. You could not end like Julian, like Manfredi, like Kosciusco; it would be imbecility for you to pretend to the end of Sylla, of Charles V., of Christina of Sweden, or the act at Fontainebleau. Brought up as a Capucin, you cannot end your career as a man. Do, then, as the dying Cæsar did—cover your head, and quit Italy. You are still young. To restore yourself to royal dignity is impossible. You may, however, make yourself esteemed as a man and an Italian, if, when we are arrayed to fight beneath Verona the supreme struggle, you will imitate your

young relative the Duc de Chartres—taking the volunteer's musket, and mixing in the Italian ranks.

"Such an act of self-denial would make you the greatest of your race, from the 'fowl in the pot' king* to your father of unpropitious memory. Surrounded by base courtiers who still beg a smile from you, and the last favour you can bestow at this moment, you cannot appreciate this counsel from an enemy. When you have slept the troubled sleep of exile, and on the free soil of England you have purified yourself from the miasma of domination, perhaps then you will esteem it less strange, and you will call it to mind.

"Sire, you depart without anger and without rancour, because neither one nor the other do you leave in us. We forgive you. The people have no remembrances, and for this can rarely show themselves magnanimous. Your youth, though darkened by atrocious acts, finds compassion with us yet, as the dawn of southern seas which a sudden mist veils and shuts out. This people possesses a poet's heart, and not yet a politic mind. To brave maledictions and reprisals, in order to obtain a success as your father did, might still be justified; to be carried away, as you are, by the theatrical manœuvres of the opera comique style belongs neither to the dignity of princes nor Christian acts, nor the conduct of a citizen. You will not have every-

* Henri IV.

where battalions ready to die at your door for you.

"Farewell! Sire. Be resigned to the justice of men if you will that God should be just to you. Bear with greatness of soul the punishment of your forefathers' crimes. Try to be able to say at any hour of your life —I caused as much blood to be shed and no more than was required to save honour; act so as to remain a man of honour, since you have ceased to be a king. Be of our times—up to the level of the age of civilization and of knowledge; bow the head reverently before the new right which was always the eternal right—that of the people and the nation. Renounce fruitless and criminal reprisals; surround yourself with men better than yourself, not with lackeys who instil the gall of hate into your heart, and the smoke of senseless ambition.

"Adieu! Sire. May Heaven grant that this farewell without bitterness, which we take of you in the name of all the kingdom, may not be changed into the farewell of Medea!"

Joyous and refulgent as on the summit of Thabor arose that same sun which at eve had denied its rays to the deathbed of the Bourbon dynasty.

The 7th September is one of those remarkable dates which, in citing, hardly requires the year to be added thereto. Few slept on that night. Spontaneous and

universal were the preparations for the solemn entry of the liberator. The first gleams of dawn found all Naples astir.

The principal streets were crowded with tens of thousands; the greater part armed from apprehension of some reactionary movement; the windows, the terraces, even the roofs, were overflowing with spectators. The Toledo was impassable; not a single house which was not prodigally decorated with national emblems or hung with tapestries; and amidst that frenzied excitement a never-ceasing sound of martial and patriotic songs; a concert of voices become hoarse from continued acclamations of "Italy! Naples and Garibaldi!"

I was smitten with the natural ambition to be among the first of my fellow-citizens to press the hand of the General. This fancy nearly cost me my life. Having consulted the programme, I desired to take up my position at the great gate of the "Foresteria," where the hero was to alight. Thanks to the aid of some friends, I was enabled to place myself; but at that moment, the multitude swelling immeasurably, pressed me so violently that I was nearly crushed to death.

My vanity was satisfied later in the Cathedral-square, in the midst of deafening acclamations under the shade of a hundred tricolour standards which floated over head, and under a cloud of flowers which fell in torrents from the windows. The flow of emotion had

paled the natural freshness of his cheek and discomposed the features of the conqueror. The paleness of his brow breathed something of sadness, which was in strong contrast with the delirious intoxication of his admirers. His eye alone presented the inward flash in all its intensity; that eye, undisturbed by the emotions of sense, seemed at that moment fixed upon the bastions of Mantua.

The warriors of heroic Greece ascended as demigods to the sky; those of more modern days have had statues; but no hero, ancient or modern, received during life so many cordial embraces from the people as did Garibaldi in that single day.

What shall I say of my own sensations?

That with eyes moistened with tears of joy I raised my countenance and thoughts to God, and from the bottom of my heart I thanked Him for three things:— For having twice rescued me from despair; for having delivered me from the despotism of the priesthood; for having made me spectatress of one of the grandest and most moving spectacles of the Christian regeneration. But what signify my sensations further? My drama has reached its last act. My story finishes on this day, which, for Italy, is a day of regeneration. That *I*, which, clothed in its garb of woe has haply drawn down your pity, reader! because all around it was mourning and silence, now disappears as a dim

and saddened star by the brilliancy of the rising sun.

And my veil?

Whilst the priests of San Gennaro, to avoid the solemnity of a *Te Deum*, and to escape the customary prayer—"Lord save thy people and thine inheritance," detained Garibaldi with the idle inspection of their treasures, I, taking the black veil from my head and placing it upon the altar, performed an act of restitution to that Church which, twenty years before, had given it to me—"Votum feci, gratiam accepi." From that moment I considered as broken the last link which bound me to the monastic state; and the title of citizeness, which, because given to all contains no special distinction, became for me the most appropriate; a fairer one than even the ancient Civis Romanus. Any one, therefore, who from that time would have styled me from habit sister or canoness, I would correct them, saying, "Call me citizeness; and, if you wish to add a distinction, say that citizeness who proposed and promoted the woman's plebiscite in Naples."

If, however, I am no friend to the black gown, I preserve no resentment to it. Any rancour I have laid on the altar together with my veil.

I acknowledge myself indebted to my long seclusion for many a practical lesson. If destiny had not for the long space of twenty years riveted the galley-

slave's chain to my foot; had I been married in girlhood; should I have learned in the world's school to watch the evil passions at their birth—passions which germinate in close atmospheres, and feed upon anger, rancours, jealousies, and suspicions.

. . . . . .

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At this period it was my fate to have made the acquaintance of a man of middle life, whose elevated sentiments, in harmony with the firmness of his character, won my esteem, and caused me from the first to hold him far superior to what individuals of princely lineage are generally.

He bore engraved on his heart the sacred image of redeemed Italy; on his head a deep scar—record of a wound received on the 15th May, from the sabre of a Swiss.

Conformity of opinions and the vicissitudes of our lives strengthened our friendship. Shortly after we sought to consecrate this mutual sympathy with the seal of religion, and we applied to the Church for the benediction of marriage.

The Church formally refused its assent.

Every form of application, memorial,—all, was vain before that pyramidal and inexorable Non possumus. We sought the blessing of another Church upon our union.

I am at last happy.

By the side of a husband who adores me, and to whom I respond with equal love, I am where the Almighty had placed the woman at the close of Creation's first week.

Why may not I, in fulfilling the duties of a good wife, a good mother, a good citizen—why may not even I aspire to the treasures of the Divine mercy?

THE END.

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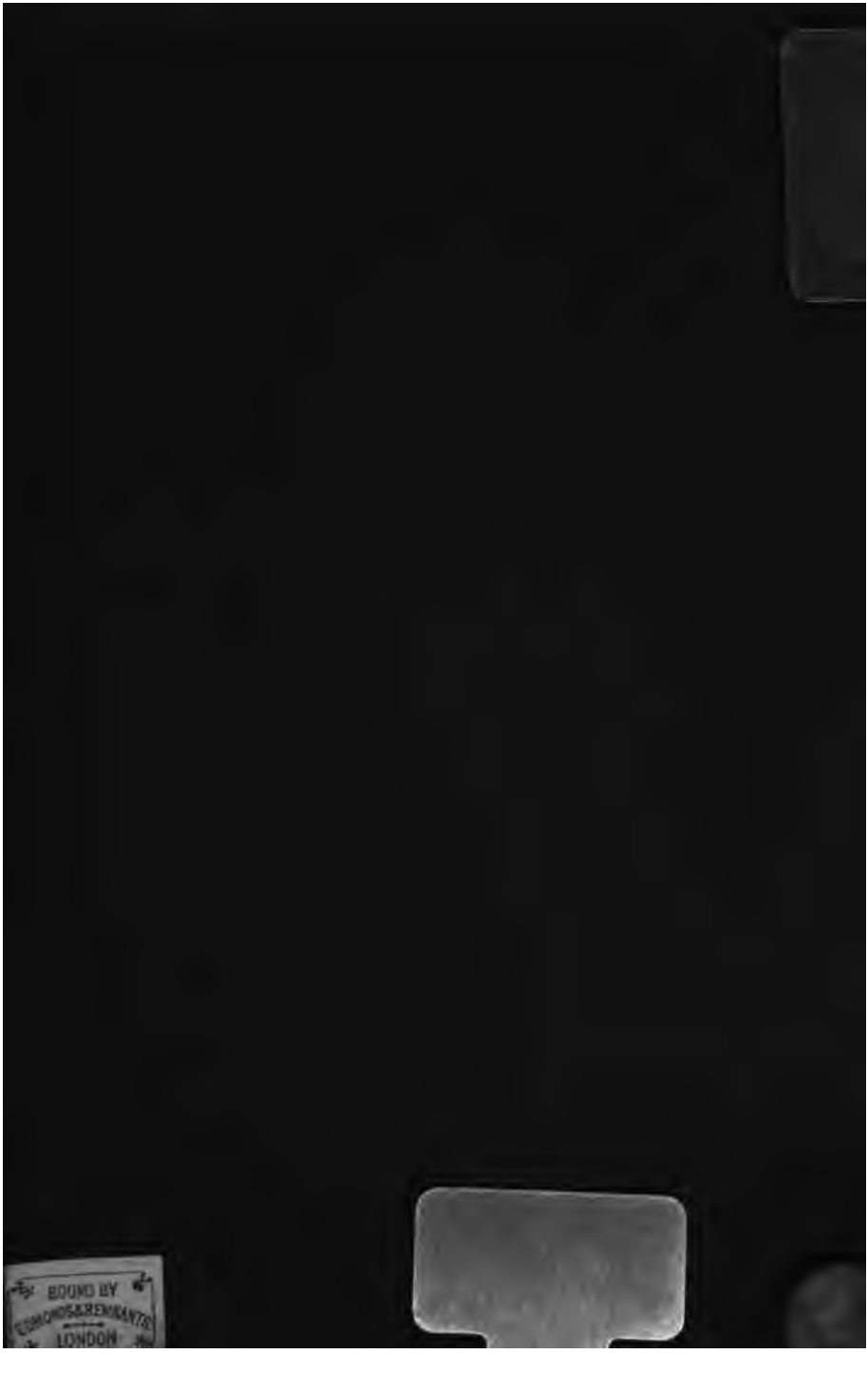
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